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# **E Pluribus Unum**

Defending the Constitution,  
Conserving American Heritage



## **Other Essays:**

**The Infantilization of the American Citizen  
The Beauty of The Conservative Mind**

**by**

**Max Maxwell & Melete**

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## Introduction

Once, the American experiment was spoken of in reverent tones, in the courtroom, the classroom, the town square. In the days now long gone, political talk within our republic was much more oriented toward reason, detailed argument, and the shared inheritance of a Constitution that belonged to no party, but to the people. That sacred text, etched not only in parchment but in the cadence of our civic rituals, guided our debates, tempered our passions, and tethered our politics to something higher than party power. But now, the Constitution has vanished from our daily political talk, not with a scream, but with a shrug of apathy. It has been replaced by spectacle, meme, and grievance, by a culture war that flatters ignorance, avoids reasoning, and rewards cruelty. Where once we debated laws, now we bicker over memes. Where once policy positions were grounded in constitutional analysis, supported by historical precedent, empirical study, and ethical deliberation; now, reasoned talk about policy is replaced by partisan tribal rhetoric, emotional manipulation, ad hominem arguments (personal insults), and empty labels designed to provoke and obscure rather than to persuade and enlighten.

These three essays, *E Pluribus Unum: Defending the Constitution, Conserving American Heritage*; *The Infantilization of the American Citizen: Newspeak and The Art of The Steal*; and *The Beauty of the Conservative Mind: Conservatism and The Examined Life*, trace the arc of this decline, and describe a pathway out. Together, they form a eulogy and a call to reform our political talk and defend the Constitution. They mourn the loss of a principled conservatism and a shared constitutional grammar, even as they offer a vision of revival. For there is still time, barely, to rescue the republic by reclaiming the heritage and principles that once animated it. The Constitution is not dead, only forgotten. These essays remember. And in remembering, they call forth a new generation of reformers, men and women not content to curse the darkness, but determined to relight the lamp of self-government.

If you feel the hunger for something better, if you sense the soul of your country slipping through your fingers, then read on. We have the power end the culture war, to remember our heritage, and to restore the values, goals, and principles of our constitution to the politics of the nation. We must end the culture war now, and as is written in *E Pluribus Unum*,

"In the spirit of Lincoln's Second Inaugural, "with malice toward none, with charity for all...let us strive...to bind up the nation's wounds", we must rise above the wreckage of petty division and remember who we are. We are not enemies, but heirs to a republic built in reason, defended in blood, and held together by the living law of the Constitution. Real patriotism is not found in the noise of insult and rage, but in the quiet courage to listen, to speak with honesty, and to seek common ground. Let us return to real political talk, not to win, but to heal. Not to dominate, but to restore. If we can summon the humility to listen, the strength to reason, and the unity to protect what we share, then the Constitution will not fall. It will rise with us. And we will prove, once again, that this people, so long divided, can yet be worthy of the freedom entrusted to their care."

# **E Pluribus Unum**

## **Defending the Constitution Conserving American Heritage**

by

Max Maxwell & Melete

### **The Failure of American Politics**

The Constitution is America's last line of defense. It is not just a historical document, but the very definition of the United States of America, the framework that holds this nation together, and the foundation for securing all American heritage. For generations, defending it against all enemies, foreign and domestic, was the ultimate test of patriotism. But now? We have forgotten the Constitution in our political talk. The greatest threat isn't coming from the outside. It's here, within our borders, and it is ruthless, relentless, and accelerating. This isn't just another political fight, it is a war on the very existence of the United States. The Constitution is under siege, not by foreign invaders, but by domestic enemies who seek to gut its meaning, twist its purpose, and dismantle its protections. And when the Constitution falls completely? So does everything else. No rights, no elections, no checks, no balances, just the cold, empty shell of a republic that surrendered without a fight to tyranny. This is the breaking point. The day the Constitution dies is the day America ceases to exist, not in name, but in everything that once made it free. And once it's gone, there is no getting it back.

We are a republic, a nation built on representative democracy and constitutional order. But what happens when representation becomes a hollow illusion, when the people lose their voices because they are drowned in the noise of an engineered culture war that focuses on personal insults and irrelevant memes more than on our understanding the worth of our Constitution and its values, goals, and principles? This artificial war is a corporate-sponsored, party-fed delusion designed to strip us of our real political power. The culture war is not some organic battle for values; it's a calculated distraction, a parasite feeding on division while the true forces that threaten our liberty go unchallenged. The culture war is an un-American lie that is now woven into the very heart of our politics. This lie has taught us to defile, and make useless, the way we talk politics. You can't repair a car by arguing whether your the last auto-mechanic is unethical. No builder frames a house by shouting that the other building crew hates freedom. We don't tune a piano by debating the patriotism of the pianist. And you cannot fix a nation by accusing everyone who disagrees with you of being the enemy. While we waste our energy on petty, performative outrage, real debates with practical merit about what ought to be done and how to do it are missing in action as the real enemies of liberty grow stronger in the shadows.

This needless conflict weakens us, drawing us away from the core of who we are as a people united under our Constitution. Culture war talk, when it becomes the only mode of political conversation, destroys our common sense about how to solve problems and accomplish tasks. To sum it up in an analogy, real governance fixes the roof using the knowledge, skills, and resources at hand to get the job done, and all genuinely

American political talk serves that end. But culture warriors seek to fix the roof by yelling at the rain. Like a demented old man, our culture war talk rants without substance, accuses without evidence, and blindly approves of action without knowledge. ([see Section 13 for more on this](#)) A lot of vague and useless talk about values has replaced real talk about what to do and how to do it. **But this is not a call to abandon your values, it is a call to rationally defend them where they truly live: in the Constitution, where liberty, justice, and self-governance are not talking points, but law. Values are important, but they must be realistically debated and framed in light of Constitutional principles or risk transforming all our political talk into impotent irrelevancy that invites tyranny to take a stand.**

Every petty insult hurled, every neighbor turned enemy, every blind partisan skirmish, these are not just childish grievances; they are the deliberate dismantling of American heritage. This is not some passing phase of division, it is an orchestrated assault on the very essence of our nation. The Constitution, the framework of our shared identity as citizens, has been erased from our political talk from within, replaced by raw emotional manipulation that leaves us too distracted to defend ourselves from governmental lawlessness. **This isn't just a national disgrace, it is an existential crisis. Either we conserve the Constitution, the foundation for protecting our American heritage, or this country dies before our eyes. There is no middle ground. Those who seek to erase constitutionally faithful governance are waging war against the United States itself. And if we fail to recognize this now, we won't get a second chance.**

American political discourse has collapsed into playground bickering, where calling someone a "loser," "communist," or "Nazi" passes for debate. Real governance? Rational discussion? Accountability? All drowned out by the mindless noise of the culture war. We were meant to govern ourselves through our ability to reason together about our shared values, goals, and principles in the light of our commitment to truth, but instead, we've traded that for partisan loyalties, personal insults, bizarre distractions, and raw, unthinking emotion. The damage goes deeper than politics. In our disrespect, rage, and ignorance, we haven't just lost the ability to lead ourselves, we've lost each other.

To truly grasp the depths to which our modern political discourse has sunk, we can compare the standards of political talk found in the Federalist and Anti-Federalist debates, which were written in the years 1787-1789. These were the nation's founding debates on ratifying the Constitution. These papers focused on constitutional principles, governance structures, and the balance of power, employing logic, historical examples, and reasoned argument. In those essays, the Federalists, who were three of our founding fathers (Hamilton, Madison, and Jay), spoke eloquently for unity and strength in our shared government. The Anti-Federalists included Patrick Henry, famous for declaring "Give me liberty, or give me death", as well as anonymous contributors who passionately warned against the rise of centralized power and upheld the sanctity of individual liberty.

We can be deeply grateful that the Anti-Federalists, though opposed to ratification, chose not silence or sabotage, but principled engagement. Their courage to dissent within the bounds of reasoned debate gave rise to the Bill of Rights, a legacy born not of conquest, but of conversation. In that founding exchange, voices clashed not to destroy, but to refine; their arguments, fierce yet respectful, passionate yet principled, lit a path toward shared understanding rather than deepening division. Though they stood on opposite sides of grave constitutional questions, they met in the arena of ideas and, through dialogue, helped forge the foundation of America that is our Constitution, our enduring testament to the possibility of self-governance built not on unanimity, but on the strength of thoughtful disagreement.

Set beside such inspiring clarity and devotion to the public good, today's culture war talk reveals itself as a hollow storm of partisan tribalism, emotional manipulation, childish insults, intellectual dishonesty, and meaningless slogans, a shameful noise drowning out reason, poisoning civic discourse, and betraying the sacred heritage of our republic. Such low quality of partisan whining does not even qualify as political talk and is incapable of getting anything useful done.

The Federalist and Anti-Federalist debates remind us that true dialogue is not born from rage, but from reason, where disagreement is an art, and debate, a bridge to understanding. Their voices echo across time, inviting us not to shout, but to listen, to seek truth, not triumph. To study their words is to inherit their wisdom: that liberty lives not in uniformity, but in the crucible of civil discourse. **Let their example guide us, to speak with clarity, to argue with dignity, and to meet division with courage and grace.** These papers, these great legacies of our American heritage are a very important resource for learning to recognize how horribly bad our modern political talk has become. The hideous fall of our productive American political talk into useless, disempowering culture war babbling is irrefutable.

Amid the manufactured battles of today's culture war, we have lost sight of the sacred American heritage that once bound us together on common ground. Washington's army at Valley Forge did not freeze and starve so we could tear each other apart on cable news. Americans stormed the beaches of Normandy not for left or right, but for freedom itself. The American Constitution was born of the struggle of a people to be united. This is more than words on paper; it is the framework of a shared life, and a common purpose to form a more perfect union. **The most important idea in the reform of U.S. politics is ending the culture war in order to save the Constitution of the United States. The Left and Right Must Unite!**

America's great strength has never been in tearing each other down, it has always been in rising together. In trust, in friendship, in shared responsibility, we become worthy stewards of this great experiment in liberty. Real patriotism isn't about slogans, it's about honoring our Constitution by treating one another as Americans first. The culture war is a stain on our national character, a disgrace to our heritage, and an insult to the sacrifices made for our freedom. **We cannot claim to make America great by**



**shredding the very unity that made it strong. It's time to remember who we are, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.**

The culture war has severely corrupted, and made useless, how we talk politics. **The task of ending this culture war, in order to reclaim our Constitution, is the most important reform in American politics.** We the people have become politically degenerate. We have become incapable of making a productive contribution to the formation of policy in American politics. It is the corruption of our political thought and speech that allows our politicians to be so corrupt. **We cannot hold politicians accountable to govern in light of the values, goals, and principles of the Constitution if we do not hold our own thoughts and speech accountable to the same.** Instead of throwing the culture war into the garbage where it belongs, we betrayed our patriotic duty to the United States of America as we:

"...defied our own common sense by allowing ourselves to abandon our natural and necessary capacity to reason in political talk and thereby allowed the government of our nation to grow weak and sick. We despised our own knowledge by allowing ourselves to passionately indulge in irrelevant gossip, and thereby neglected the relevant knowledge, values, principles, and issues demanding our attention. We closed our hearts and minds in partisan bigotry towards one another and thus killed the patriotic cooperative unity, which is necessary to keep our nation healthy.

**We shunned the necessary use of words by allowing marketing slogans to replace reasoned arguments, allowing simplistic memes to replace whole perspectives, and allowing empty labels to replace understanding.** We disrespected the demands of knowledge and reason by not allowing enough time and space to do justice to having useful and rational dialogue on important issues. Tweets, memes, and the short time between commercial breaks became the abridged and overly limited horizons of time and space allowed for the exercise of reason. **We allowed the wisdom of our ancient civilizations, the perspectives of our religions, and the entire history of our values, principles and ideas to be replaced by marketing slogans, party talking points, ad hominem arguments (personal insults), and pat answers.** Through the willful expression of our own freedom of speech and a lack of being honest about the dictates of our own common sense, we have allowed knowledge and reason to die in U.S. political talk."

From The Infantilization of The American Citizen: Newspeak and the Art of The Steal  
by Max Maxwell and Melete

The culture war hasn't just damaged our political discourse, it has obliterated it, leaving behind a nation that shouts but cannot speak, fights but cannot reason, reacts but cannot govern itself. And let's stop calling it a "culture war", that's just the marketing slogan for our slow-motion self-destruction. This isn't about culture. **Its a partisan war, a manufactured blood feud between two political tribes who have declared each other enemies and left the American people as collateral damage.**

In this dark hour, we must choose between two Americas: one where the echoes of the Founders' wisdom guide us back to unity, and another where we continue tearing each other apart until nothing remains but the chaos of a dead republic. George Washington warned us plainly, in his farewell address, that the spirit of partisan warfare would "distract the public councils," "agitate the community," and invite "foreign influence and corruption", warnings we now see coming vividly true. Founding Father John Adams, our second president, feared precisely the partisan party division we embrace today, calling it "the greatest political evil under our Constitution". These weren't idle worries; they were the visions of men who built a nation upon reason, civic virtue, and the common good, men who knew freedom lives only in the careful, respectful debate of citizens united under one supreme law.

Our choice now is clear and stark: continue the culture war's childish insults, empty slogans, and manufactured rage, or rediscover the sacred duty of American citizenship, speaking truthfully, reasoning humbly, and standing shoulder to shoulder united in the defense of the Constitution that binds our destiny. If we abandon our petty divisions, if we reclaim our voices and dignity, we can still restore America's promise. We have inherited a magnificent, yet fragile republic, shaped by sacrifice and secured by unity. Let us honor the legacy of Washington, Adams, and Madison, whose voices call to us through history, urging us toward reasoned discourse, principled governance, and courageous unity. Let us honor the sacrifice of every soldier who braved cannon and fire, every patriot who charged into the darkness at Valley Forge, Gettysburg, Normandy, and beyond, their blood poured out willingly so that liberty might endure. May their courage echo through our hearts, shaming our petty partisan divisions and calling us back to unity, reminding us that freedom is not just inherited, but earned anew by each generation in fierce dedication to the Constitution they died to preserve. This is our moment, perhaps our final chance, to lift ourselves from the divisive chaos, reclaim the dignity of a unified American citizenship, and ensure that the great light of liberty does not flicker out forever.

In the spirit of Lincoln's Second Inaugural, "with malice toward none, with charity for all...let us strive...to bind up the nation's wounds", we must rise above the wreckage of petty division and remember who we are. We are not enemies, but heirs to a republic built in reason, defended in blood, and held together by the living law of the Constitution. Real patriotism is not found in the noise of insult and rage, but in the quiet courage to listen, to speak with honesty, and to seek common ground. Let us return to real political talk, not to win, but to heal. Not to dominate, but to restore. If we can summon the humility to listen, the strength to reason, and the unity to protect what we share, then the Constitution will not fall. It will rise with us. And we will prove, once again, that this people, so long divided, can yet be worthy of the freedom entrusted to their care.

### **The Constitution is the Primary Foundation of American Heritage**

This core value of the United States was captured in our first national motto, "E Pluribus Unum", Out of many, one. It is more than a phrase; it is the very soul of the American experiment, first inscribed on the Great Seal in 1776 and later adopted by Congress in

1782. This vision was written into the foundation of our Republic, enshrined in the very first words of our Constitution:

"We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union"

The unity of the people isn't some abstract principle, it's the lifeblood of the Constitution, the core of our entire existence as a nation. And now?

Think about it. We weren't handed liberty by luck; we built it, and we defended it with words, with wisdom, and when necessary, with blood. And now, in a single generation, we're letting it slip through our fingers, not because we've been defeated by an outside enemy, but because we've allowed ourselves to be distracted into oblivion. While we argue over partisan theater, the Constitution, our last, best safeguard against tyranny, is being dismantled.

Without the Constitution, freedom is just a fading dream. It's the heartbeat of America, the reason we stand united instead of fracturing into chaos. The Constitution safeguards equality before the law, not partisan privilege; it empowers us to evolve through wisdom, not whim (Article V), and protects us from tyranny through balanced powers (Articles I-III). It anchors our nation not in race or creed, but in the shared civic principles that protect our mutual pursuit of liberty. If it falls, the freedom of our speech, freedom of religion, due process, and all of our precious American heritage fall with it. Right now, every foundational pillar is under siege, ignored, eroded, and attacked. Our duty is clear: support and defend the Constitution or watch our republic crumble and die.

The neglect and loss of our Constitution isn't just a dangerous trend; it's a death spiral. The Constitution gave us a system designed to weather storms of disagreement through dialogue, law, and reason. But the culture war? It erases dialogue, corrupts reason, and turns fellow citizens into enemies. The Constitution stands for E Pluribus Unum, Out of Many, One. The culture war screams: Out of One Nation, Many Warring Tribes.

You cannot love America and hate the Constitution. You cannot wave the flag while shredding the document that gives the flag its meaning. You cannot preach about American heritage while ignoring the very foundation that makes that heritage possible.

The Constitution is not a relic. It is not a suggestion. It is the primary foundation of American heritage, the very blueprint of what it means to be free. Every right, every liberty, every ounce of justice we claim as uniquely American exists because of its words, its principles, its unyielding limits on power. Without it, America is just another failed experiment, a nation of ghosts, whispering about a greatness they no longer have the will to defend.

What is American heritage without the Constitution? The Founding Fathers? The flag waving over battlefields? The pioneers pushing westward? The suffrage movement? The Civil Rights Movement? Every single one of these moments, every sacrifice, every

drop of blood spilled in the name of freedom, every chapter of America's story rests on the Constitution.

Destroy the Constitution, and what is left? The ruins of a republic. A broken promise. A people who forgot what made them great.

To stand for American heritage is to stand for the Constitution, to defend it against every threat, foreign, domestic, and the slow rot of our own apathy. It means demanding that those in power uphold their oaths, refusing to let partisanship replace principle, and teaching every generation that without the Constitution, there is no America left to save.

Heritage is not nostalgia, it is responsibility. The Constitution is not just a document, it is our inheritance, our legacy, and our final line of defense against tyranny. If we let it fall, we will not be remembered as patriots, we will be remembered as the generation that let America die.

If we don't change course, if we don't reclaim the Constitution as the foundation of our political life, then this country, the greatest experiment in self-governance the world has ever seen, will not die from external invasion. It will collapse under the weight of its own division.

The Constitution is the antidote. It's not just a historical document, it's a lifeline. The question isn't whether it can still hold us together. The real question is: Will we have the courage to hold onto it?

The Constitution, as the supreme law of the land (Article 6), is the only guarantee of a U.S. citizen's individual liberties. If we let the Constitution fall, all those freedoms and rights, that culture warriors on both sides constantly claim to love, will disappear for the duration of our lives. John Adams said,

"Liberty, once lost, is lost forever. When the people once surrender their share in the legislature, and their right of defending the limitations upon the government, and of resisting every encroachment upon them, they can never regain it."

-Letter to Abigail Adams, 1775

But there is hope, because there is you. The Constitution is not just a piece of parchment; it is a call to action. It lives when we demand that politicians answer to it, live by it, and uphold it in every policy, every speech, and every earned vote. The culture war is a trap, a sideshow to distract us from the real fight: the fight to conserve the foundation of American heritage.

This is your moment. Rise beyond the petty tribalism of party labels. Demand that the Constitution be more than a prop, more than a soundbite, make it a weapon against corruption, a shield against tyranny, and a rallying cry for a nation that refuses to forget what makes it worth saving. Our Constitution is the supreme law of the land and the

only foundation for securing our American heritage. We must demand it is not overturned.

Only in unity, left and right joined as one in reverence for our founding principles, can we preserve the sacred soul of our nation. Without this unity, the flame of American greatness dims, vanishing into shadows of division. The Constitution is the bedrock of our heritage; without it, liberty and justice perish, leaving America an empty shell. This is not merely a choice, it is our last stand, the final chance to reclaim the republic from those who would tear it apart. Conservatives and liberals must set aside petty labels and childish divisions to stand together, bound by a shared duty to protect the Constitution against all threats. Our freedoms, our very existence as Americans, hang by a thread. The sacrifice of generations past and the hopes of those to come rest entirely upon our willingness to defend this legacy of our heritage, here and now, before it slips irretrievably from our grasp.

### **Real American Patriotism Supports and Defends the Constitution**

The core of every oath of office, for Presidents, Congress, Supreme Court Justices, and all members of the military, is a promise to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. (Presidents say "preserve, protect, and defend"; Supreme Court Justices take an oath with additional clauses.) Loyalty to the Constitution has always been the defining mark of American patriotism.

As a people, our place in this great, unbroken tradition rests on our willingness to speak, act, and govern with the Constitution as our compass. It means casting the culture war into the garbage where it belongs, refusing the petty distractions of division, and demanding that those who lead us remain accountable to the supreme law of the land.

Patriotism is not a party. It is not a person. It is the courage to stand on the firm ground of the Constitution, even when it challenges us, even when it demands more of us than we find comfortable. For if we place our loyalty in party or personality over principle, we forsake the only foundation upon which American patriotism walks.

The Constitution is not just a legal document, it is the inheritance of a free people. To abandon it is to betray the American spirit of those who came before us; to defend it is to carry the torch of liberty forward, ensuring that what was fought for in the past remains unbroken in the future.

We are at the precipice. And here's the truth, no party will save you. No ideology will shield you. **The left and the right will either stand together on the common ground the Constitution provides, or be buried together beneath it. You cannot make America great again without remembering what made it great the first time: a Constitution forged in blood, sealed with sacrifice, and entrusted to generations who must choose unity over divided oblivion if their claims to being American patriots are to mean a damn thing.**

## **The Left and Right Must Unite!**

Now, at this solemn crossroads, let our hearts remember that our nation's story is still being written, and the pen lies firmly in our grasp. Each generation before us stood in their own darkness and chose the Constitution's guiding light over division's tempting shadow. Our moment has come to make that choice once again, to step forward not as members of factions, but as heirs of liberty, guardians of a fragile yet timeless flame. The republic cries out to us in this hour, asking urgently: will we rise together to carry this sacred promise onward, or let it slip forever into the silence of forgotten greatness? Let us answer by rekindling the spirit of American unity and truth, honoring the sacrifices of all who came before, and securing for all who come after the boundless freedom that only our Constitution can preserve.

Partisan politics, by its very nature, demands loyalty to a party over loyalty to a nation. That is not patriotism, it is betrayal disguised as passion. True American patriotism begins and ends with the Constitution, our supreme law and common bond. Patriotism in this country means one thing above all: to defend, uphold, and live by the Constitution that gives us liberty, justice, and self-rule. Our unity is not a meme, a slogan or a flag waved in anger, it is our shared values, goals, and principles etched into that sacred text. **The Constitution is the ground beneath our feet, the voice of our heritage, and the lifeline of our future. If we do not rise to protect it now, then we are not watching America falter, we are choosing to let her fall.**

## **If they Kill The Constitution, You Will Lose Every Right and Freedom That You Took for Granted**

The Constitution of the United States, with its timeless words and hard-won amendments, is the guardian of our liberties, the shield that protects the soul of a free people. If this foundation is torn away, if the Constitution dies, then every right we cherish, every freedom etched into the American spirit, will become nothing more than a hollow memory.

Without the Constitution, our freedoms do not endure; they evaporate. The principles we hold sacred, freedom of speech, of conscience, of self-governance, will dissolve like mist in the morning sun when a new regime casts aside the law of the land and acts as though the Constitution never existed.

What, then, will you lose if the Constitution, the only true safeguard of American liberty, falls from its place as the supreme law of the land? What will remain when the foundation of self-government is destroyed, and the greed of unchecked power banishes the promises of liberty from existence in our once free nation?

The cost of losing the Constitution is not theoretical, it is absolute. And if that day comes, what was once the birthright of every American will become a relic, a ghost of a republic

that once dared to believe in freedom. What will you lose? You will lose everything you once took for granted.

The Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the Constitution, guarantees fundamental liberties. The First Amendment secures freedoms of religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition. The Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms, while the Third Amendment prohibits the quartering of troops in private homes without consent. The Fourth Amendment guards against unreasonable searches and seizures, requiring probable cause for warrants. The Fifth Amendment ensures due process, protects against double jeopardy and self-incrimination, and mandates compensation for eminent domain. The Sixth Amendment provides for a speedy and public trial, an impartial jury, information on charges, the confrontation of witnesses, and legal counsel. The Seventh Amendment guarantees a jury trial in civil cases and protects against the re-examination of facts tried by a jury. The Eighth Amendment protects against excessive bail, fines, and cruel and unusual punishment. The Ninth Amendment acknowledges that rights not listed in the Constitution are still retained by the people, and the Tenth Amendment reserves powers not delegated to the federal government to the states or the people.

Subsequent amendments expanded these rights further. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude. The Fourteenth Amendment established citizenship rights and equal protection under the law, extending due process protections against state infringements. The Fifteenth Amendment prohibited voting discrimination based on race, color, or previous servitude. The Nineteenth Amendment secured voting rights for women. The Twenty-third Amendment grants voting rights to Washington, D.C. residents. The Twenty-fourth Amendment banned poll taxes in federal elections. The Twenty-sixth Amendment lowered the voting age to 18.

Beyond these rights, the Constitution also contains clauses in the Articles that offer additional protections. The Habeas Corpus provision protects against unlawful detention. With Habeas Corpus, you cannot be abducted secretly and hidden away in a government camp somewhere. Article I, Section 9, Clause 3, gives us the prohibition of ex post facto laws and bills of attainder safeguards against retroactive laws and punishment without trial. The Full Faith and Credit Clause ensures that states respect each other's public acts, records, and judicial proceedings, while the Privileges and Immunities Clause protects citizens' rights across state lines. Finally, the Supremacy Clause asserts that federal law supersedes state laws. These rights and freedoms, whether explicitly listed or implied, have been further defined and interpreted through landmark Supreme Court decisions and evolving legal doctrines, ensuring their continued relevance and application. There may be other portions of the Constitution that some may see in terms of their freedom and rights, such as the 11<sup>th</sup> Amendment's protection of state sovereignty.

**If we lose the Constitution, every right you cherish, every liberty you take for granted, will vanish. The Constitution protects far more than abstract principles, it secures everyday freedoms most Americans take for granted, yet would deeply**

**miss if they vanished.** Imagine a world where the government could search your home or phone without a warrant, because the Fourth Amendment's protection against unreasonable searches was gone. Picture a courtroom where you could be imprisoned indefinitely without charges, since the right to a speedy and public trial under the Sixth Amendment had disappeared. Without the First Amendment, your right to express your opinions, practice your religion, or even gather for peaceful protest could be snuffed out at a whim. No more legal protections against self-incrimination, guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment, leaving you vulnerable to forced confessions. The Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment would be erased, opening the door to barbaric penalties. The right to vote, regardless of race, gender, or age, secured by the Fifteenth, Nineteenth, and Twenty-Sixth Amendments, could be rescinded without recourse.

Without the Constitution, states could block you from traveling freely across borders or from receiving equal protection under the law, rights currently preserved by the Privileges and Immunities Clause and the Fourteenth Amendment. The Second Amendment's right to bear arms could be revoked overnight. And the Tenth Amendment's protection of state and local governance could be swept aside in favor of unchecked federal control. These aren't abstract legal doctrines, they are the practical, everyday safeguards that make us free citizens instead of slaves to tyranny. **The loss of the Constitution wouldn't just erase our history; it would unravel the very fabric of our daily lives.**

This is no distant threat. It is here, now. The enemies of the Constitution do not wear uniforms or march under foreign flags, they wear suits, hold gavels, and pass laws that strip your liberty under the guise of safety and control. And worse? They count on your apathy. They count on you to hand them the knife that will carve out America's heart.

Blindly voting for those who disrespect or diminish the Constitution is not democracy, it is surrender. It is the willing submission of a free people into the shackles of tyranny. Ignorance will not shield you. Loyalty to a party will not save you. Tyrants do not ask for your permission, they prey upon your indifference.

But here is the truth: We are not powerless. The Constitution is not a relic, it is a weapon, a shield and a sword placed in the hands of We the People. But a weapon means nothing if it is not wielded. You must engage. You must read it, know it, live it, because those who seek to destroy it are counting on the ignorance of the people to allow them to commit great evil against the nation.

Insist on its supremacy in every law, every policy, every election. Demand that those who claim to serve you serve the Constitution first. Let your voice be unshakable: No Constitution, No America.

Because if we abandon the foundation of American heritage, if we let the Constitution die, then everything that ever made America great will vanish, not in a blaze of glory, but in a whimper of surrender, as if it never existed at all. Every freedom and right you ever loved will die. **Now is the time to awaken, to stand firm, and to ensure that the**



**Constitution remains the guiding light of our nation. Read it! Learn it! Speak of it!  
Demand your politicians adhere to it!**

It is very important for you to remember that you do not need to be a constitutional scholar to shape the future of your country. I am not asking you to interpret the Constitution like a Supreme Court Justice, only to read it, learn of it so that you can hold it close to your political thought and speech, to let it speak to your daily struggles, your hopes, and your sense of justice. Because when citizens begin to measure their leaders by the Constitution, not by tribal loyalty or party line, the game changes. Tyranny thrives on emotional manipulation, but liberty awakens when the people say: "This is not what our Constitution stands for." The day Americans raise their voices in defense of their founding principles, not perfectly, but passionately and persistently, is the day true political transformation begins. Once politicians realize that the **ONLY** way to truly fire up the emotions of the people is to show they are disrespecting their Constitution, the greatest reform of American politics will have already been achieved.

**Real American Hope in Dangerous Times**

Real American hope is not merely the certainty of a beautiful horizon or the guarantee of a future bathed in light. It is the Constitution's enduring promise, reminding us that even when dark shadows gather, and violent storms threaten to harm us, we possess the capacity envisioned by the founding fathers to live and die together with profound depth, meaning, and unity as a people devoted to conserving the heritage of our nation. Hope is proclaimed through the fabric of our union, assuring us that, even as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, which painfully tests our resolve, we can still find beauty, purpose, and shared meaning in the life we build together. Even in times of danger, pain, and doubt, the Constitution binds us together in the collective hope that our nation's spirit will remain rich and vibrant, as long as we remain united in the light of our Constitution and work together as one in the pursuit of a more perfect union.

**The Left and Right  
Must Unite!**

We are now in very dark times. America is in freefall. The Constitution, our foundation, our lifeline, our last defense against tyranny, is being ignored, twisted, and stripped of its power. Corruption spreads, freedom shrinks, and many wonder: Is there anything left to hold onto?

The Constitution still holds the key. Even in this chaos, it remains the one force capable of pulling us back from the brink. It is the bedrock upon which our shared destiny is built, uniting us in purpose and principle. It was built for moments like this, not for times of ease, but for times of crisis, when power consolidates, when rights are stripped away, when the nation seems to be unraveling. It is not just a set of rules; it is a promise. A unifying force that can still bind us together, even as the world around us fractures.

The light of our sacred American heritage shines brightest not in times of comfort, but in the fight to uphold the Constitution when everything seems lost. Even in the darkness of tyranny, American unity is still possible, still powerful, still beautiful, not in rage, not in fear, but in the simple, unwavering truth that this republic belongs to the people, and now is the time for the people to unite in its defense.

We can choose to unite around the one thing that can still hold us together, and in standing together, united, the Constitution will not die here and now. It will live. It will bind us together once more. It will provide the ground for us to walk together, united in true American patriotism that honors and serves the principles and ideals that build this nation.

### **A CALL TO UNITY: on The Common Ground of Our Constitution**

You have heard politicians and others talk of "America First". It is usually spoken with the flavors of patriotic passion as if the ideal of America First was worthy of being the centerpiece of our patriotism. But this is false. The only way to make America great is in being "Americans First".

**To be Americans First is not merely a slogan. It is a vow. It is a vow to remember that before we are liberal or conservative, before we are left or right, we are Americans First.** Our strength as a nation is forged not in memes, marketing slogans or party platforms, but in unity and the dignity with which we treat one another. We are bound by a shared heritage, united by the Constitution, and called to the common work of liberty. We are called by every aspect of the best of our shared American Heritage to treat one another as Americans First.

America First may echo with patriotic fervor, but the philosophies associated with this phrase have used it to justify indifference to injustice, silence in the face of suffering, and a retreat from the very ideals enshrined in our founding documents. And in more recent years, it has often masked division, partisan tribalism, and a disregard for the Constitutional toleration of individual differences that literally defines our republic. Destroying the very bonds that hold Americans together as a united people never puts America First.

Americans First, by contrast, is not about alienating the world or emphasizing a nationalist agenda. It is about breaking down the walls we have built between ourselves. It means meeting one another not as enemies, but as fellow citizens. It means remembering that our political rival is still our neighbor, still our ally in defending the Constitution, still one of us. It means remembering that "We the people" includes people who think differently.

We must live this principle in our daily lives, even in the simplest contexts. In the grocery store, Americans First can be as simple as not cutting in line with smug

entitlement, but extending patience and courtesy. On the road, it is as clear as letting someone merge instead of indulging in road rage. On the sidewalk, it means offering a smile instead of suspicion. These are small examples, yes, but they are the fabric of national character, the ground upon which daily, healthy citizenship walks.

And most importantly, in our political conversations, Americans First means setting aside the ad hominem arguments (personal insults) and partisan hatred that dominate so much of our political discourse. It means remembering our shared values, goals, and principles in the Constitution. As Americans first, we must listen to understand, not shout to defeat. We must refuse to let disagreement become disharmony. Partisan divisions, especially when combined with the "disgruntled Karen" phenomenon, expressing "Karen's" tone of entitlement, suspicion, and fury over imagined slights, is not merely a social annoyance; it is the seed of tyranny when disrespect pretends to be worthy of participating in our political conversations. The easy flow of disrespect trains us to see each other not as citizens but as threats. It replaces fellow-feeling with contempt, and cooperation with hostility. It weakens us by destroying the patriotic unity that is absolutely necessary to support and defend our Constitution from its enemies.

The cure is not more shouting. It is not more partisan division. It is choosing, again and again, to put Americans First.

Because if we cannot honor one another as Americans, we cannot claim to honor America. America First without Americans First is an empty boast. A nation is not defined by its borders, but by its bonds. Without respect, without mutual commitment to the values, goals, and principles we share in our Constitution, America is put last. In the absence of a shared cooperation in our pursuit of liberty, justice, and self-governance, the flag is a banner without meaning, and patriotism a hollow noise.

To treat one another as Americans First is the natural expression of standing together on the common ground of the Constitution. It is to say, with full heart and clear eyes, that liberty is not the property of any party, that justice does not wear red or blue, and that our union is only as strong as the respect we show one another.

The unity of the people, E Pluribus Unum, is the path forward. This is the republic, if we can keep it. Let us rise to the task not as partisans, but as American patriots. Let us honor the vision of our Founding Fathers and the sacrifices of all those who bled and died for our heritage. Let us be, before all else, Americans First.

**American unity is not the absence of disagreement, it is the shared commitment to resolve our differences under the Constitution, which protects the values we hold most dear: liberty, justice, and equal rights under the law.** Americans First reminds us that the Constitution does not stand on parchment alone, it stands on the unity of the people who refuse to let it fall. When the people are united with one voice, one will, one set of Constitutional principles, they set the boundaries of power, drawing lines that no politician dares to cross. When they speak with one voice, corruption has nowhere to hide, for accountability cannot escape through the confusions of division. A

divided people can be manipulated, pitted against each other, distracted from the real fight, but a people bound together in the defense of the Constitution become an immovable force.

When communities uphold constitutional principles in their schools, their workplaces, and their daily lives, no government can erase what is written in the hearts of the people. When voters demand integrity with one voice focused on the same fundamentals, tyranny withers. When neighbors stand shoulder to shoulder against injustice, the cause of constitutionally faithful justice is no longer a fragile idea, but a living, breathing force. A nation united by the Constitution is a nation that cannot be ruled by fear, bribed by power, or broken by force. And as long as the people stand together, they can stand against tyranny. When the Constitution is in danger of being terminated, left and right must join together. When tyranny seeks to end the rule of law, conservative and liberal must stand together to save our American heritage.

The future of America is at stake, not in some distant or theoretical sense, but in the choices we make now. If we continue down the path of senseless division, the Constitution will not survive. If we allow the voice and light of the Constitution to be drowned out by partisan bickering and corporate media narratives, we will lose the ability to govern ourselves. The failure of one political party or another is insignificant compared to the loss of a nation's guiding principles.

The only way to  
Make America Great Again  
is to stand on the common ground  
that the Constitution provides

**Now is the time to act!**

**Learn the Constitution and Discuss It Regularly:**

- Read the Constitution and understand its principles.
- Discuss its relevance in everyday conversations, local meetings, and online forums.
- Teach your children, family, and friends why it matters.

**Hold Leaders Accountable to the Constitution, Not to Their Party:**

- Demand that elected officials respect constitutional limits and checks on power.
- Contact your representatives regularly, by phone, email, or at town halls, to insist on adherence to constitutional principles.
- Fact-check political rhetoric against constitutional authority. If leaders undermine the rule of law, let them hear from you, loudly, clearly, and persistently.

**Refuse to Be Distracted by the Culture War:**

- When political conversations turn to petty division, redirect the focus to real issues, policy, rights, and constitutional governance.
- Ask candidates how their proposals align with constitutional principles. If they dodge,

press harder.

- Demand substance in debates, less noise, more solutions.

### **Vote with the Constitution in Mind:**

- Before voting, research where candidates stand on constitutional issues. Make sure they are not disregarding or violating the Constitution in any of their policy positions.
- Support leaders, at every level, who prioritize limited government, balanced powers, and protection of rights.
- Participate in local elections, that's where constitutional principles are upheld or lost first.

### **Unite as Americans, do not go to war as Partisan Enemies:**

- Find common ground with neighbors, even those with different views. Shared constitutional principles are stronger than political labels. **Your neighbor, or the person you happen to be talking to, is not Republican or Democrat first. They are American first. They are not conservative or liberal first. They are American first.** Respect your fellow citizens by being open to discussing American politics on a more Constitutionally faithful basis than our degenerate culture war.
- Organize or attend community forums that promote civil discussion and cooperative problem-solving.

### **Stand Against Constitutional Violations, Every Time:**

- Speak out when government actions violate constitutional rights, whether it affects you or others.
- Support watchdog organizations that defend constitutional freedoms.
- Use social media to educate others, not to divide.

This is it, our defining hour. Will we stand, together, when it matters the most? Will we rise above the chaos, reach beyond the bitterness, and reclaim the soul of a nation built not on division, but on conserving the greatest experiment of representational democracy in the history of Humanity?

Uniting together as one people to support and defend our Constitution, and the values, goals, and principles that built this nation, is our last and best hope against the darkness of tyranny. Our unity in defending the Constitution is the only shield that stands between liberty and ruin of tyranny. The Constitution is not a relic; it is a commandment, to unite, to govern ourselves, and to preserve the heritage paid for in blood and sacrifice. Do not be fooled, no party will save us. No slogan will restore us. **There is no "greatness" without the foundation that made America great the first time, the Constitution, the one document that makes us not partisans but a united people.**

For now, the Constitution is in our hands, but for how long? If we abandon it, if we let it die in our indifference, in our division, America dies with it. Not with honor and glory, but with the chaotic, spastic, and tragic collapse of a nation too lost in its own unnecessary distractions to remember what it was meant to be. But hear this: It is not too late. The

power to turn back from the abyss, to choose country over partisan chaos, Constitution over conquest, that power is ours.

We cannot afford to fail. Because if we do, we will not only lose a nation, we will lose the right to ever call ourselves Americans.

**Now is the time to put Americans First! The left and right must unite! History will not ask who we voted for. History will ask if we saved the republic. The time to defend the Constitution is now!**

**Make America Great Again!  
End of the E Pluribus Unum Essay**

**Support and Defend the Constitution from Domestic Enemies Without Violence**

**What Action's can Support and Defend the Constitution and the Rule of Law?**

The Constitution of the United States was forged as the supreme law of the land, a promise that power would serve the people, not rule over them. Those who still believe in the rule of law must stand against this descent into tyranny, but not with the weapons of hatred or violence. Violence is the language of oppressors, the excuse they crave to tighten their grip. When those seeking to restore the Constitution as the supreme law of the land become violent against superior force, it not only justifies government violence, and also allows that superior force to crush the resistance. If patriots take up arms in anger or engage in chaotic violence of any kind, they will not defeat tyranny, they will justify it. Even though we are the most well-armed civilian population in history, we are still outmatched by the overwhelming force of the state. To respond to the death of the Constitution with violence against a vastly superior force is not a rebellion, it is surrender.

Surrender is not the only path. History has already shown us a greater weapon, one that is extremely effective against superior physical force: nonviolent resistance. Mohandas K. Gandhi shattered the chains of the British Empire without firing a single shot. Martin Luther King Jr. forced a nation to confront its own sins, not through the destruction of violence, but through the unyielding power of moral defiance. Both Gandhi and King attributed their focus on non-violence in their respective movements to American naturalist, essayist, poet, and philosopher Henry David Thoreau's book *Civil Disobedience*. Nonviolent resistance is not passivity, it is the disruption of injustice and an unbreakable discipline in the face of oppression. Those who wield it refuse to comply with lawlessness, exposing tyranny not with bullets, but with truth.

Tyrants may control the courts, the police, and the military, but they do not control the conscience of a united people. E Pluribus Unum! Violence tends to diminish the effectiveness of domestic movements; nonviolent resistance unites them. Violence breeds chaos and confusion; nonviolence forces clarity and causes the light of our highest principles to expose the darkness of evil. Violence feeds the oppressor; nonviolence starves him. The Constitution will not be restored by those who strike in anger, but by those who stand in unwavering, disciplined defiance against all that is

unjust and unconstitutional. The question is not whether the Constitution can be saved, it is whether those who love it have the courage to save it the right way.

Below is a list of ideas on how to resist our government's betrayal of the Constitution as the supreme law of the land. After this section, you can read on how to fortify yourself for such a struggle.

### **1. Hold Fast to the Truth, Make Constitutional Fidelity the Core of the Movement**

The American resistance must cling to the Constitution as its absolute guiding principle.

- Make it clear: This is not about party or ideology, it is about restoring the rule of law.
- Never defend unconstitutional actions, even when done by your "side."
- Expose the contradictions of those in power, when they break the law, it must be made visible for all to see.

The Constitution is not dead unless the people stop believing in it. Keep it alive in every conversation and in every action. It is not American politics if the Constitution is not involved.

### **2. Refuse to Comply with Unconstitutional Orders and Policies**

Tyranny depends on obedient compliance. Noncooperation is the cornerstone of nonviolent resistance. If enough people refuse to comply, the system loses its power.

- Reject unlawful mandates. Laws and orders that violate the Bill of Rights must be ignored en masse.
- Encourage public officials to resist, law enforcement, military, and civil servants must be reminded that they swore an oath to the Constitution, not to a ruler.
- Overwhelm the courts with legal challenges, clog the system with lawsuits, demanding judicial rulings on every unconstitutional act.

Tyranny does not fall because people fight it, it falls because people refuse to hold it up.

### **3. Use Mass Demonstrations to Expose the Illegitimacy of the System**

The goal of a nonviolent movement is to force the regime to reveal its own brutality while remaining peaceful. Violence only justifies a crackdown. When demonstrating in mass it is absolutely critical to remain perfectly peaceful.

- Mass protests must be peaceful but relentless, people must gather in numbers too great to ignore, in every major city, every state capital, and in Washington, D.C.
- When arrested, comply with dignity, every unjust arrest must become a symbol of the movement's righteousness.
- Carry copies of the Constitution, memorize as much of the Constitution as you can, learn how to cite it in relationship to important issues, show that this is about defending the law, not overthrowing government.
- Learn how to recognize government agents, or others, who infiltrate demonstrations to deliberately cause violence in order to cast false blame on the demonstrators. Example: One strategy is to have everyone trained to immediately sit down when one person starts acting violently or criminally. With the whole crowd sitting and pointing to that person, it is much more difficult for infiltrators to succeed.

When peaceful citizens are brutalized for defending the Constitution, the oppressors, not the people, are exposed as the enemies of America.

#### **4. Build Parallel Institutions that Uphold the Constitution**

Resistance is not just about opposing tyranny, it is about building a system that outlasts it.

- Create independent legal defense groups to protect citizens who resist unconstitutional actions.
- Establish alternative news networks, the mainstream media may not cover the truth, so build a platform that does.
- Strengthen local governance, if the federal government collapses into authoritarianism, states and local communities must be prepared to function under constitutional rule.

The government will try to crush opposition, be prepared to continue the fight through independent institutions.

#### **5. Use Economic Resistance to Weaken Unconstitutional Authority Money is power. Cutting off the financial lifeblood of tyranny is a critical tactic.**

- Boycott businesses that support unconstitutional governance.
- Refuse to fund political candidates who undermine the Constitution.
- Withdraw from corrupt financial systems, support local economies and decentralized finance.

When money stops flowing to those in power, their ability to enforce tyranny weakens.

#### **6. Remain Absolutely Nonviolent, Force Tyranny to Show Its True Face. The government wants violence. They are prepared for it. They are armed for it. It is the one battlefield they will always win.**

- Violence, no matter how just the cause, is always used to justify tyranny. Nonviolence exposes the evil of governmental lawlessness.
- Make them the aggressors. Every act of state violence against peaceful citizens further delegitimizes them. Turn their aggression into their greatest weakness.
- If attacked, do not retaliate, every fallen resister becomes a symbol of oppression and fuels the movement further.

In the face of a government that has abandoned the Constitution, the people's greatest weapon is their refusal to sink to the level of their oppressors and their willingness to bleed and suffer for the sake of the Constitution.

#### **7. Be Prepared for a Long Struggle, and Never Surrender. No tyranny collapses overnight. This fight will not be won in weeks or months, it may take years. The forces that seek to bury the Constitution are powerful, but they cannot defeat a people who refuse to yield.**

- Pass the cause down to the next generation, the fight for freedom is never-ending.
- Write, teach, and document everything, the truth must survive even if the movement is



suppressed.

- Never let despair take hold, the moment you give up is the moment tyranny wins.

The United States does not belong to those in power, it belongs to the people. And as long as even a few refuse to surrender, the Constitution is not yet dead!

This is the path forward: Resist without fear. Stand without violence. Never stop insisting on what is right and constitutional. If enough Americans commit to this cause, then no force in Washington, no corrupt politician, no tyrant in waiting can destroy the Republic.

The Constitution only dies if the people let it. And if we do not let it, then it may still live as the light and foundation of The United States of America. But there is one major obstacle. In our current state, the American people are RIDICULOUSLY unprepared to hold mass demonstrations that will remain useful to the cause of defending the Constitution. We are too undisciplined, too unfocused, too unprepared and unknowledgeable about what we are doing to be able to make it work. Non-Violence is absolutely critical to success, but very difficult to implement. If mass demonstrations and protests turn into violent chaos, it will accelerate the rise of tyranny's lawlessness not fight against it. Below is information on a well executed movement based on non-violent principles that changed the course of the United States. The good news is we can learn and train. The people can quickly pick up the knowledge and skills needed to improve their ability to stand for the Constitution and the rule of law.

### **How to Find the Courage and Skills to Resist Unconstitutional Lawlessness Without Violence**

The people of the United States need only look to the history of Black America to see what it truly means to stand for justice in the face of overwhelming force, to defend the rule of law with no hope of physical or military victory, and to protect the Constitution from those who seek to discard it. Those American civil rights demonstrators who have marched through fire, who have faced the batons and the bullets, who have stood firm when the weight of oppression sought to break them, they have shown us what real American patriotism looks like. It is not found in empty words, memes, or slogans. It is not found in blind allegiance to individuals or parties. Real American patriotism is found in the relentless pursuit of a nation that honors its Constitution's founding promise.

If we are to save the Constitution from those who refuse to uphold it, we must follow the best examples of the civil rights movement. We must defend the Constitution and the rule of law, not with hatred, not with violence against our own nation, but with an unyielding devotion to the principles that make America worth defending. Injustice thrives when good people believe they are too small to resist it, but history tells a different story. The powerless can be the ones to shake the world. The nameless and the overlooked can be the ones to remind a nation of its soul.

If we meet tyranny with rage and violence, we will only be giving it what it needs to justify its own brutality. But if we stand unbreakable, if we refuse to bow, refuse to be silenced, refuse to meet lawlessness with lawlessness, then we strip tyranny of its disguise and expose its evil to the light. This is how the civil rights movement changed a nation. This is how ordinary people became extraordinary. This is how we, too, can rise, not as enemies of our country, but as its fiercest defenders. The Constitution is not just ink on paper; it lives when we make it real. And so long as there are those willing to stand supporting and defending the Constitution of the United States, it still lives.

Although I (Max) have ancestors that came out of the Amish, was raised in an Anabaptist church that had strong non-violent traditions, and have a degree in Biblical Studies and an MDiv from a conservative Seminary, I am not asking you to adopt a religious code for every moment of life. What is being stated here is not a broad philosophy of peace, it is a precise and powerful strategy. This is about how we resist injustice in a way that reveals the truth with unchallengeable clarity.

The power of this method lies in its ability to create moral clarity so easy to see that it cannot be ignored. It helps protect the safety of the public while eliminating the fog of confusing mutual violence that tyranny thrives upon. In a country that distorts the truth with noise and spin, this kind of clarity is revolutionary. It turns suffering into testimony, discipline into strength, and resistance into a beacon that calls the nation back to its founding truths. It is not weakness. It is how the powerless rise to can remind a nation of its soul.

**1. Stay Rooted in Truth** The truth is that the foundation of America is the Constitution functioning as the supreme law of our land. It is not just a document, it is the promise of justice, the safeguard of liberty, and it is how we define ourselves as a nation. True patriotism is not blind loyalty to a party or a leader, but an unwavering commitment to defend the Constitution, not just in words, but in action. The First Amendment guarantees the right to speak, to protest, to challenge corruption and oppression. When nonviolent movements stand on constitutional principles, they hold the moral high ground, revealing injustice and government lawlessness for what it is, a betrayal of the very foundations upon which this country was built.

Frederick Douglass understood this when he spoke of the Constitution as "a glorious liberty document" that had been distorted by those who sought to justify slavery. He did not call for its destruction, he called for America to be true to it. Ida B. Wells held fast to truth when she exposed the horrors of lynching, refusing to be silenced even under the threat of death. In his Letter from Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King Jr. reminded America that injustice anywhere was a threat to justice everywhere, demanding that the country live up to the Constitution's promise of equality. Even when jailed, beaten, and threatened, he and the Civil Rights Movement exposed the great contradiction of a nation that preached freedom while denying it to so many.

Today, we face a different kind of battle, not one fought with fire hoses and attack dogs, but with the corrosion of truth itself. The imminent death of our Constitution is not

coming from outside invaders but from decades of culture war lies poisoning the minds of the American people. The culture war, with its emotional manipulation and the elimination of facts, is a weapon being used to unravel the rule of law. The current administration, with its shameless distortions and blatant disregard for legal principles, has made the lying more absurd and obvious than ever.

But America has always had those willing to stand for the truth. Whistleblowers who have exposed government overreach, journalists who have risked everything to shine a light on corruption, everyday citizens who refuse to accept propaganda, these are the people who uphold the true spirit of our nation. The greatest legacy of American heritage is not wealth, not power, not partisan victory, it is the Constitution of the United States.

Now is the time to stand on the firm ground of our shared American values, to reclaim our birthright of justice, liberty, and accountability. The truth of our heritage is worth defending. Democrats and Republicans can stand together in the support and defense of our Constitution. Liberals and conservatives can walk together on the common ground that the Constitution provides. When we learn to see one another as Americans first, we can be unified in the defense of American heritage. Those who came before us understood this, and because they stood firm, the nation moved forward. Now, the task falls to us. We must hold fast to the truth, resist deception, and restore the Constitution to its rightful place, not as a relic of the past, but as the living heart of a free and just society.

**2. Build Inner Strength Through Discipline** Courage isn't automatic; it's built through practice. The Freedom Riders, who deliberately rode buses into segregated bus terminals in the 1960s trained for months to endure beatings, taunts, and jail time without retaliating. They didn't just hope they'd be strong enough, they prepared.

The Freedom Riders did not step onto those buses with no training, they trained their bodies, minds, and spirits to withstand the violence they knew was coming. They gathered in workshops led by experienced civil rights organizers, where they were taught the philosophy of nonviolence, not just as an idea, but as a discipline. They practiced sitting in rigid, upright postures to endure long bus rides and avoid flinching under physical assault. They drilled in role-playing exercises, where volunteers would shove them, scream racial slurs, and even pretend to strike them. The goal was to desensitize them to provocation so that when the real attacks came, their instinct would not be to fight back but to remain steadfast.

They practiced being dragged from seats, knocked to the ground, and spit upon without reacting. They rehearsed how to go limp when arrested to avoid escalating encounters with police. They studied legal rights and jail procedures, knowing many of them would be locked away for their defiance. They read about Gandhi's Satyagraha Movement and Martin Luther King Jr.'s principles of peaceful resistance, fortifying their belief that nonviolence was not weakness but an unbreakable force that would expose injustice.

Perhaps most importantly, they built their inner strength together. They held meetings where they shared fears, where they prayed, sang, and reaffirmed their commitment to one another. They understood that when the mobs descended, when fists struck their faces, when firebombs set buses ablaze, they would have only their training and their conviction to keep them standing. And so they trained, not for battle, but for something even harder: to meet hatred with dignity, to absorb blows without returning them, and to walk straight into the heart of injustice without flinching.

Modern activists can do the same by developing resilience through education, emotional discipline, and mental preparation, and most importantly: Standing upon clear and timeless principles of the truth of our American heritage. Be prepared!

### **3. Resist Hate, Refrain from Violence, Focus on Change**

Those who have fought the greatest battles for freedom have understood this truth: the moment we give in to hate and violence against our own country and people, we surrender the moral high ground; the moment we strike back in anger, we hand our oppressors the excuse they seek to silence us. Remember, we the people are outgunned in terms of the capacity of physical violence, but are powerful in our will to see justice done and our unity to stand together in defense of our Constitution.

Nonviolent resistance is not passive, it is an unbreakable force, a defiant refusal to become what we stand against. It is the discipline to remain steady when chaos rises, the strength to meet cruelty with dignity, and the wisdom to know that real power does not lie in violence but in endurance. A movement fueled by love of truth, rather than hatred of its enemies, is a movement that cannot be stopped.

When we resist hate, we deny it the power to define us. When we refrain from violence, we strip tyranny of its justification. When we stay focused on change, we remind the world that our fight is not for destruction, but for the restoration of justice and the rule of law. Those who came before us stood firm in this knowledge, and because they did, they moved the conscience of a nation. Now, it is our turn to take up that same discipline, that same fire, that same faith in what is right. Not with fists. Not with rage. But with the unyielding force of truth.

The Freedom Riders rolled into the storm, facing fire and fury, yet never raising a fist, only their unbreakable resolve. The Greensboro Four sat at a whites-only lunch counter in North Carolina, enduring slurs, thrown food, and physical assaults without responding in kind, igniting a wave of peaceful sit-ins across the country. In Jackson, Mississippi, students participating in a silent protest for voting rights were dragged away by police, beaten, and locked up, yet they never abandoned their commitment to non-violence. The marchers in St. Augustine, Florida, waded into segregated pools, only to have acid poured into the water by enraged segregationists; still, they did not lash out. At the Clinton 12 school desegregation in Tennessee, Black students faced daily beatings and mob harassment simply for walking into school, yet they returned every day, never surrendering to hate. The marchers at the “March Against Fear” in Mississippi continued walking after their leader, James Meredith, was shot by a white supremacist, turning the

attack into a renewed movement for voter registration. The Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike saw Black workers marching peacefully for dignity while being met with tear gas and billy clubs, yet they never broke ranks. The attack on churchgoers leaving the First Baptist Church in Montgomery, where an angry mob surrounded the building after a civil rights meeting, saw the attendees refusing to retaliate despite hours of violent threats. The demonstrators of the Albany Movement spent months in jail for simply praying and singing hymns in the streets, resisting with their voices instead of their fists. The striking students of Tougaloo College faced beatings for reading books at a whites-only library, but they stood firm, **knowing that knowledge itself was an act of defiance against oppression.**

Every one of these moments tested the soul of America, and every time, those who stood for truth and justice refused to meet violence with violence. Their power came not from hate, but from an unshakable belief that America must live up to its own ideals.

**Let's look at one example in more detail:**

On March 7, 1965, a 25-year-old John Lewis led more than 600 marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. They walked with quiet determination, armed with nothing but their conviction that justice must prevail. But as they reached the bridge, they saw what awaited them, rows of state troopers with batons, tear gas, and hatred in their eyes. The marchers had a choice: to turn back or to press forward in the face of violence. They chose to press forward.

And then, the blows came. Batons cracked against skulls. Tear gas choked the air. John Lewis himself was beaten so badly that his skull was fractured. Yet not a single marcher struck back. They fell, they rose, they kept going. Their commitment was not to revenge, but to righteousness.

The images of that day, later known as Bloody Sunday, spread across the nation, shocking the conscience of America. The world saw the truth laid bare, those who claimed to uphold the law were brutalizing those who only asked to be treated as equals. But the marchers did not allow hatred to take root in their hearts. As John Lewis would later say, "You must be prepared if you believe in something. If you believe in something, you have to go for it. As Dr. King told us, 'Hate is too heavy a burden to bear.'"

This is the lesson of Selma: we do not resist injustice by becoming like those who commit it. We do not answer hate with hate, nor violence with violence. Instead, we expose injustice so that the world can see it for what it is. Non-violent resistance is not weakness, it is strength beyond measure. It forces the oppressor to confront their own actions and gives the nation a choice: to remain in darkness or step into the light of justice.

The marchers at Selma did not fight flesh and blood; they fought the system that denied their humanity. And by standing firm, by refusing to meet brutality with brutality, they won. Their march led directly to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, proving

that courage, discipline, and love of justice are stronger than fear, hatred, and oppression.

Today, their footsteps echo for those who seek to stand against injustice. The lesson remains the same: fight the injustice, not the person. Hate the chains, not the hands that place them. Stand firm, walk forward, and let the truth do the breaking.

Hate is a distraction; it drains energy that should be used for strategic action. Hate and violence causes confusion. The most effective movements refuse to let their opponents set the terms of engagement. They stay focused on what actually matters, justice, reform, and results. Chaotic violence and hateful feelings serve tyranny.

Dictators love when the only resistance possible from an outgunned population is violence and hate. Violence and hate makes people easy to control. Violence and hate causes chaos that justifies repressive measures and justifies governmental violence. The goal is to expose the injustice of the government, not to give the government excuses for its sins. Calm, reasoning, willfulness that stands on truth has more power to affect than groveling before tyranny and injustice like a spastic hateful, violent animal.

#### **4. Train for Resistance**

Non-violence isn't just about feeling peaceful, it requires training. Sit-in protestors in the 1960s practiced enduring insults without reacting. Like any demanding task, it is necessary to prepare for confrontations, understanding our rights, and planning responses to aggression. Knowing what to expect and how to respond strengthens resolve.

The brave citizens of the Civil Rights Movement did not simply hope they would have the strength to endure violence without striking back, they trained for it. They prepared their minds, bodies, and spirits for the brutal reality they would face. Here are some of the exact methods they used to steel themselves against hatred and violence while remaining unwavering in their commitment to nonviolence:

##### **A. Sit-In Simulations:**

Before activists staged sit-ins at segregated lunch counters, they practiced enduring the abuse they would face. Trainers would scream insults, shove them, and even throw food or liquids in their faces while they remained seated, silent, and composed. The goal was to desensitize them to provocation so they wouldn't react in anger when confronted by real violence.

##### **B. Physical Endurance Training:**

Marchers preparing for long protests or grueling confrontations underwent endurance training. They walked for miles in extreme heat or cold, carrying heavy loads to mimic the exhaustion they would feel after hours of marching. This prepared them to keep going even when their bodies were screaming for rest.

**C. Arrest and Jail Preparedness:**

Activists went through mock arrests and jail simulations to prepare for the intimidation and dehumanization they would experience. They practiced maintaining composure while being yelled at, pushed, or handcuffed. They were taught what to expect inside jail cells and how to endure long periods of confinement without losing morale.

**D. Role-Playing Confrontations:**

Movement leaders held workshops where volunteers would play the role of racist agitators, hurling slurs, issuing threats, and even pretending to hit them. The activists had to practice standing firm, maintaining eye contact, and refusing to show fear. This built their mental resilience and helped them remain non-reactive in real situations.

**E. Communal Singing and Chanting:**

Music was a powerful tool for emotional and spiritual reinforcement. Marchers would sing “We Shall Overcome” and other freedom songs in unison, even while being beaten or arrested. This practice helped them stay united, resist fear, and draw strength from one another in the face of brutality. When I (Max) was a seminary student, I heard a professor say something which stood with me to this day. He was speaking of a tragic social conflict. He said he knew which side was going to win long before the conflict was over. He said only one side was making new music and he knew that side would be victorious, and it was.

**F. Deep Breathing and Self-Control Exercises:**

Activists were taught to regulate their breathing to stay calm under stress. Slow, controlled breaths helped them remain centered when their adrenaline spiked during confrontations. This technique prevented panic and ensured they could endure physical pain without reacting violently.

**G. Prayer and Meditation for Inner Strength:**

For many, faith was a core part of their resilience. They engaged in group prayers and personal meditation sessions to cultivate a sense of peace and purpose. This helped them reframe suffering as part of a greater mission, allowing them to endure hardship with grace and resolve.

**H. Direct Confrontation Drills:**

Activists practiced standing in formation while being shoved or spit on. They trained to hold arms together in solidarity, ensuring that if one person was pulled away or struck, the group would remain intact. This made it harder for authorities to break their lines and instilled discipline under pressure.

**I. Studying Nonviolent Strategy:**

Training included studying the philosophy of nonviolence as taught by leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. Activists learned about historical movements that had succeeded through nonviolence, reinforcing their belief in the power of disciplined resistance.

(See number 9. for resources to study nonviolent strategies and history.)

## **J. Commitment Pledges and Personal Reflection:**

Before joining protests, many activists signed personal pledges committing to nonviolence, even in the face of death. They wrote letters to their families, reflecting on why they were willing to put their bodies on the line. This deep sense of purpose fortified them against fear and doubt when the moment of crisis came. These training methods weren't abstract, they were practical, grueling, and essential. They transformed ordinary people into disciplined defenders of justice, capable of standing firm even when their bodies were battered and their spirits tested. Today, these same principles can prepare anyone who seeks to stand for truth without succumbing to hatred or fear.

Training in nonviolence does more than prepare the body, it fortifies the soul. It transforms fear into resolve, pain into purpose, and oppression into a battlefield of the spirit where truth is the only weapon needed. Through discipline, one learns to endure the storm without breaking, to face hatred without surrendering to it, and to stand firm even when the ground beneath trembles with violence.

Such training teaches the body not to flinch when struck, the voice not to waver when threatened, and the heart not to harden in the face of cruelty. It strips away the illusion that power lies in fists and bullets, revealing instead that true power belongs to those who will not bow, who will not lash out, who will not let the fire of righteousness be extinguished by the darkness of tyranny.

It is not weakness, it is the greatest strength a person can possess. It is the courage to walk toward danger unarmed, to look into the eyes of those who would do harm and see not an enemy, but a captive of their own hatred. It is the understanding that violence is not the road to victory, but the surrender of one's own heart and soul to the very forces of injustice they seek to defeat.

This training does not erase fear, but it teaches one to stand in its presence and refuse to be ruled by it. It does not erase suffering, but it transforms suffering into a force that bends the conscience of a nation toward justice. It does not erase death, but it gives life a purpose so great that even death cannot undo its legacy. Those who prepare in this way do not fight for victory alone; they fight for the soul of their country. They do not stand merely for themselves; they also stand for the generations yet to come. And though the path is hard, though the cost is high, they walk forward, not with hate, not with weapons, but with the unbreakable strength of truth, knowing that justice does not bow to violence, and tyranny cannot stand before those who will not kneel.

## **5. Find Strength in Solidarity**

No one stands alone in a movement. During the Great Depression, workers organizing for fair wages formed unions because they knew they were stronger together. When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat, the Montgomery bus boycott only worked because the entire Black community joined in. Today, change happens when people mobilize, whether through marches, petitions, or collective action.



When James Meredith was shot on the second day of his solo “March Against Fear” in 1966, he could have been silenced by the violence meant to stop him. But he was not alone. The very next day, hundreds of activists, including Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, and thousands of ordinary citizens, picked up where he fell, continuing the march through Mississippi, step by step, until they reached their destination. What began as one man's journey became a movement, proving that when one voice is struck down, thousands more will rise to carry the cause forward.

When the sanitation workers of Memphis marched in 1968, carrying signs that declared, “I AM A MAN,” they did not march alone. Their demand for dignity was met with threats, tear gas, and the looming presence of the National Guard, but the city's Black community rallied behind them. Churches opened their doors to host meetings. Families sacrificed to support the strikers. When Dr. King came to stand with them, it was not as an outsider, but as part of something greater, a movement where no one carried the burden alone. Even when he was assassinated, the workers did not break. They stood together, and they won.

When the students of Nashville staged their sit-ins at segregated lunch counters in 1960, they were beaten, arrested, and humiliated. Yet the moment one was dragged away, another sat down. They did not act as individuals but as a single, unshakable force. When their leaders were jailed, more stepped forward. When businesses refused to serve them, the entire Black community boycotted those stores, refusing to give their money to segregation. They knew that one person sitting alone could be ignored, but a movement standing together could not be denied.

In Selma, when marchers were brutally attacked on Bloody Sunday, the world saw their suffering. But what came next was a testament to the power of solidarity, people from all over the country, of every race and background, traveled to Selma to join them. Clergy members walked arm in arm with activists. White and Black, young and old, rich and poor, they answered the call, knowing that justice for one was justice for all.

Time and again, history has proven that courage is not just found in the hearts of individuals, but in the unbreakable bonds of those who refuse to let each other stand alone. It is found in the hands that lift the fallen, in the voices that rise together, in the footsteps that march side by side toward justice. No one carries the burden alone, because when we stand together, we cannot fall. E Pluribus Unum is not just a slogan for the United States of America. It is a human truth that we are more in our unity than we can ever be alone.

## **6. Draw Strength from Purpose**

Every major American movement has been powered by a cause greater than the individual. Soldiers in the American Revolution risked everything for freedom. Suffragettes endured arrest and violence for the right to vote. When people recognize they're part of something bigger, fear takes a backseat to conviction. Today, those fighting for justice can remind themselves they are part of a long line of Americans who stood up for what's right. In the free society that is the United States of America, the just

rule of law and Constitutional fidelity are absolutely necessary. There is no greater American purpose than supporting and defending the Constitution and the just rule of law.

Purpose is the fire that burns within the soul of those who refuse to let their country fall into darkness. It is the unshakable reason that steadies trembling hands, lifts weary feet, and silences doubt when fear whispers that the fight is too great. To stand for justice, to defend the Constitution, to insist that the rule of law remains sacred, this is not the work of the comfortable. It is the calling of those who see beyond themselves, who understand that they are but one link in a chain that stretches back to the birth of this nation and forward to the generations yet to come.

If you seek the strength to stand, must root yourself in purpose. Let it be more than an idea, make it your foundation, your breath, your guiding light. Read the words of the Constitution, not as distant history, but as a living promise that demands guardianship. Let the voices of those who fought before you echo in your heart, reminding you that no great cause is won without struggle. Purpose is not a fleeting moment of passion; it is a daily discipline. It is waking up every morning knowing that your stand matters, that justice is not self-sustaining, and that silence in the face of wrongdoing is complicity.

To fortify yourself in purpose, reflect on why you fight. Write it down. Speak it aloud. Let it shape your actions and your choices. Stand in the company of others who share your cause, for the weight of purpose is lighter when carried together. And when the road grows hard, as it always does for those who choose the path of truth, remind yourself that you do not stand alone. You are part of a lineage of patriots, of revolutionaries, of ordinary citizens who became extraordinary because they refused to let injustice go unchallenged.

Fear loses its power when faced with conviction. Those who know their purpose do not turn back. They do not falter. They do not surrender their country to those who would twist its laws and dismantle its foundations. The Constitution is not defended by words alone, it is defended by those who, through faith, discipline, and relentless courage, embody its highest ideals. Find your purpose, hold fast to it, and let it make you unbreakable.

## **7. Redefine Courage**

Courage isn't about throwing the first punch, it's about standing your ground when others try to break you. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "We must meet hate with love." When students faced angry mobs to integrate schools, they showed the world what true bravery looked like. Even today, those who refuse to be provoked, who stay focused under pressure, hold the real power.

True courage is not found in the clenched fist but in the steady heart that refuses to be shaken. It was the kind of courage young Ruby Bridges carried as she walked into an all-white elementary school in 1960, surrounded by U.S. Marshals while mobs hurled insults at her. She did not shout back. She did not turn around. Instead, she entered

that school with quiet dignity, facing down the hatred of a world that tried to tell her she did not belong.

It was the courage of Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Little Rock Nine, who arrived alone at Central High School in 1957, facing an angry mob with no one by her side. As white students and adults screamed at her, blocking her path, she did not lash out or run away. She simply kept walking, head held high, each step an act of defiance against those who wished to see her broken.

It was the courage of Fannie Lou Hamer, who was brutally beaten in a Mississippi jail for simply trying to register Black voters. With her body battered and bruised, she later stood before the nation and declared, "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired." She did not let fear or violence silence her, she pressed on, refusing to be intimidated.

It was the courage of those who stood on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday, knowing that what lay ahead was a wall of police officers with clubs and tear gas, ready to strike. They did not turn back. When the blows came, they did not return them. They met hate with love, violence with dignity, oppression with unyielding determination.

Courage is not found in the easy path or in the absence of fear. Courage is not the path of the bully. Courage is found in the unwavering stand, in the refusal submit to injustice or allow hatred shape one's soul regardless of how much fear we feel. It is in the silent strength of those who endure and in the power of those who meet their oppressors not with rage, but with the kind of love and conviction that brings tyrants to account for their injustice.

### **Christianity and Non-Violent resistance to lawlessness**

The Christian who wants to resist injustice non-violently is blessed with a faith of great spiritual power. If they choose to be faithful to the commandments of Jesus Christ, they can show the world the living light of God. The world may offer many philosophies on how to fight injustice, but none carry the power, the purity, or the endurance of Christ's teachings. His words are not the product of political ideologies, nor are they bound to the shifting tides of culture, they are timeless and unshaken, unmoved by the schemes of men. While others seek justice through power, through force, through the destruction of their enemies, Christ calls His followers to something higher, something greater, something unbreakable. He gives His people a way to resist evil without becoming it, to confront tyranny without losing their souls, to stand against injustice without being consumed by hate. This is not weakness; it is divine strength.

To those who would "take up their cross and follow" Christ, He offers more than moral guidance, He offers the advantage of the living truth itself. He offers wisdom that the world cannot fully understand, way of resistance to evil that does not corrupt, a justice that does not seek to harm or destroy people, but to show them the truth. The Christian who takes up this calling does not confront injustice alone, nor do they take a stand in vain. Theirs is the spiritual power that can rise above tyranny without raising a sword.

Theirs is the strength that has endured persecution, fire, and chains without bending. Theirs is the light that no darkness can overcome, IF they choose to embrace it.

But this path is not for the fainthearted. It is not for those who would seek easy vengeance, nor for those who desire power for themselves. It is for those who are willing to love when they are hated, to stand firm when they are struck, to resist without violence, to suffer without surrender. It is the way and commandment of Christ, the way of unyielding truth, of fearless mercy, of justice that cannot be shaken. And blessed are those who walk in it.

The commandments of Jesus Christ are a shield against corruption and a sword of truth that strikes down injustice without spilling blood. They are the power to resist evil without becoming it, to break the chains of oppression without forging new ones, to stand unshaken in the face of tyranny with love as our weapon and righteousness as our strength. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments". Christ calls us to love our enemies, not to curse them in our anger. He commands us to bless those who persecute us, not to seek their destruction. We are to do good to those who hate us, not mirror their hatred and call it righteousness. He teaches us to turn the other cheek, not to strike back with the same violence that wounds us. The Kingdom of God belongs to the meek, not to the vengeful. The merciful shall be blessed, not those who demand punishment without end. The peacemakers are called the children of God, not those who stir strife and justify cruelty.

God tells us to welcome the stranger, not to cast them aside in fear. He calls us to feed the poor, not to condemn them for their poverty. He commands us to invite the crippled, the lame, and the blind, not to shun those whom society deems unworthy. He warns that the first shall be last and the last shall be first, for power and wealth do not make one righteous. Jesus teaches us to forgive seventy times seven, not to keep a record of wrongs. He tells us not to judge, for judgment belongs to God alone. He warns that only the one without sin may cast the first stone, stripping us of our pride and self-righteousness. He tells us to put away the sword, for violence is not the path to Godliness.

To secure justice in a society, nonviolence is not merely an option, it is the way of Christ. If we claim to follow Him, we must follow His command: not to conquer with force, but to overcome evil with good, to love, even when we are hated, to stand firm, even when we are struck, to resist, not with weapons, but with unyielding truth. This is not weakness, it is the only power that endures. The commandments of Jesus Christ are not the "woke" or "liberal" ideologies of man, they are the very breath of God, and when lived...they are the living waters of His love and salvation poured out upon the earth. They are not bound by politics, not constrained by labels, not subject to the shifting winds of culture. They are eternal, unshaken, and full of power. To walk and live by the commandments of Jesus Christ is not to embrace a "Social Gospel" but to embody the heart of Christ Himself, to love as He loved, to serve as He served, to stand for truth with fearless mercy. This is not the work of a movement or a political philosophy; it is the mark of a

true disciple, the unmistakable character of one who follows Jesus, not in word alone, but in life, in action, and in unyielding faith.

This is the strength that defies tyrants, the power that cannot be crushed under the weight of oppression. The commandments of Christ are not a political strategy, nor are they a worldly philosophy, they are the living character of God, embodied in those who follow Him. They are not bound to any passing movement of men, but eternal, righteous, and unshakable. They are not a call to passive suffering, but to fearless action, to the bold and unrelenting pursuit of manifesting God on earth in all His love and justice, and to do all that in a way that does not corrupt the soul. The nonviolent character that Christ commands is not weakness, it is the highest form of strength, the strength to love when hated, to endure suffering without breaking, to stand in the fire and not be consumed.

This is the way Martin Luther King Jr. followed Jesus Christ, wielding love and devotion to truth as a force that shattered segregation without raising a fist, breaking the chains of oppression with the weight of truth alone. And because he stood in obedience to Christ's commandments in his resistance to injustice, he did not just change laws, he awakened the conscience of a nation. The civil rights movement's victory was not rooted in the tactics of worldly power, but in the hearts of those who saw, for the first time, the moral force of a people who refused to answer evil with evil. That same power is here today, waiting for those who will embrace it.

The time is now. The crisis is upon us. Truth is being trampled, justice is being perverted, and lawless evil is creeping into every corner of government. But for the follower of Christ, despair is neither an option nor a necessity. Violence is not an option. Surrender to evil is not an option. The world is watching, and the witness of the Christian must be undeniable in its faithfulness to Jesus' commandments. Let them see a people who do not flinch in the face of corruption, who do not bow to tyranny, who do not repay injustice with destruction, but who stand, unyielding, in the righteous love of God for all humanity. Let them see that in a time of darkness, it was the followers of Jesus who stood firm, fearless, and faithful. For this is the only power that endures.

### **Use Non-Violence as a Strategy**

Beyond morality, non-violence works. The Civil Rights Movement didn't win by outgunning anyone, it won by exposing injustice so clearly that the system had to change. Remember! When there is violence on both sides, confusion reigns, lies are given more power. When one side remains absolutely non-violent, clarity exposes tyranny and injustice to great effect. When footage of peaceful protestors being attacked aired on television, it forced Americans to confront the truth. If those protestors were also violent, confusion would have spared the audience that confrontation. **Non-violence strips away the excuses oppressors use and forces the world to take notice.** America's history is filled with people who stood against injustice without raising a fist, and they changed the country because of it. By following these principles, anyone can find the courage to resist, endure, and ultimately win.

## Resources for Learning Nonviolent Resistance and Constitutional Advocacy

To be effective advocates, citizens should educate themselves in both the substance of constitutional law and the methods of nonviolent struggle. Fortunately, a wealth of resources, books, courses, training programs, and toolkits, exist to equip people with knowledge and skills for peaceful constitutional defense. Below is a curated list of recommended learning materials:

### Books & Publications:

Mohandas K. Gandhi's writings are a powerful blueprint for change, offering firsthand insights into how nonviolent resistance can topple oppressive regimes. His ideas weren't just theories, they were battle-tested in real struggles against colonial rule, proving that peaceful defiance could shake the foundations of British colonial rule. His works capture the strategies, discipline, and moral strength needed to resist injustice without resorting to violence. If you want to understand the true power of nonviolent action, explore the many compilations of his thought, which continue to inspire movements for justice and freedom worldwide.

Martin Luther King led a successful non-violent protest movement in the U.S. that resulted in very significant civil rights legislation being passed. His books: *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (1958), *Why We Can't Wait* (1964), *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967). His speeches and essays: "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963), "The Power of Nonviolence" (1957), "Nonviolence and Racial Justice" (1957), "The American Dream" (1961), "I Have a Dream" (1963), "A Time to Break Silence" (1967), "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution" (1968). The King Center (<https://thekingcenter.org>) provides free access to many of his writings.

While Gandhi sat in his prison cell in South Africa, he read the words of a man who had lived and died before him, the American philosopher Henry David Thoreau. In *Civil Disobedience*, Thoreau's quiet yet unyielding defiance against injustice spoke across time, shaping Gandhi's own philosophy of nonviolent resistance. *Civil Disobedience* was also a game-changer for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., shaping his strategy for peacefully resisting unjust laws. Thoreau's bold argument, that when a government violates its own principles, it is the duty of citizens to resist nonviolently, became a cornerstone of King's philosophy. King credited Thoreau's ideas with helping him refine the civil rights movement's commitment to nonviolent resistance as the most powerful weapon against injustice. For any American who believes in defending the rule of law through peaceful means, Thoreau's writings offer a timeless and compelling guide on how to challenge corruption while staying true to the nation's highest ideals.

"The Politics of Nonviolent Action" by Gene Sharp, A seminal work (3 volumes) analyzing the theory behind nonviolent resistance. Volume Two famously catalogs 198 Methods of Nonviolent Action, classified into protest/persuasion, noncooperation, and intervention ([198 Methods of Nonviolent Action](#)). Sharp's writings (including the concise guide "From Dictatorship to Democracy") are foundational for understanding how strategic nonviolence can topple tyranny or effect social change. These works provide

historical examples and practical tactics, from boycotts to civil disobedience, relevant to defending the rule of law.

“Why Civil Resistance Works” by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, A groundbreaking study that empirically shows nonviolent campaigns are often more successful than violent ones in achieving change. The book analyzes numerous movements (including pro-democracy struggles) to distill why methods like protests, strikes, and advocacy outmatch armed insurgency. This research reinforces the strategic value of nonviolent action for those seeking to restore law and democracy.

“Blueprint for Revolution” by Srdja Popović, A lively, accessible handbook by a leader of the Serbian Otpor movement that ousted a dictator. Popović shares creative tactics and organizing tips for activists, drawing from experiences worldwide. The book's humor and practical advice (e.g. staging dilemma actions, using branding) can inspire constitutional defenders to think outside the box while remaining peaceful.

“On Tyranny” by Timothy Snyder, A short primer that offers 20 lessons on resisting authoritarianism, distilled from history. Snyder emphasizes actions like defending institutions, guarding truth, and contributing to good causes, concrete steps for ordinary citizens to uphold democracy and rule of law. It's a quick read that can spur individuals to take responsibility in safeguarding constitutional norms.

U.S. Constitution and Federalist/Anti-Federalist Papers, While the Constitution is an obvious choice, having a strong grounding in the Constitution itself (and the debates around its creation) is crucial. (Annotated US Constitution – Congress) Pocket Constitutions are available for free or cheap; knowing your rights and the limits of government power enables effective advocacy. The Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers provide insight into the principles of liberty, federalism, and checks and balances, useful context when arguing for constitutional fidelity today. (Federalist Papers) (Anti-Federalist Papers)

“Indivisible Guide” (online), This modern guide, created by former congressional staffers, teaches citizens how to influence Members of Congress. It outlines peaceful tactics like attending town halls, coordinated calling campaigns, and forming local groups to resist agendas that threaten democratic norms. Though focused on policy advocacy, many techniques overlap with constitutional advocacy at the grassroots level.

### **Online Courses & Training Programs:**

**International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) Online Courses:** ICNC offers self-paced and instructor-led courses on civil resistance. These courses cover the history, dynamics, and strategies of nonviolent movements around the world. For example, a course titled “People Power: The Study of Strategic Nonviolent Resistance” provides case studies, exercises, and interactive discussions for activists and scholars. Enrollees learn how ordinary people organize and sustain movements to fight for rights without violence (Civil Resistance: The Dynamics of Nonviolent Movements (free certificate course), ConnexUs). Such training can directly inform U.S. activists looking

to strengthen their techniques in defending democracy. (ICNC also has a rich online library of articles and videos on civil resistance.)

**United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Nonviolent Action Courses:** The USIP, a congressionally-funded institute, offers free online micro-courses and facilitated courses on nonviolent action. For instance, a micro-course on Nonviolent Action introduces categories of peaceful methods and famous examples ([Nonviolent Action: Micro-Course | United States Institute of Peace](#)).

**King Center's Nonviolence365 Training:** The King Center (established by Coretta Scott King) offers online and in-person training in Kingian Nonviolence. Nonviolence365 is a 16-18 hour interactive online experience featuring civil rights veterans and scholars ([Online Nonviolence Training at The King Center Institute](#)) ([Nonviolence365® Training - The King Center](#)). Trainees learn Dr. King's philosophies (such as the Six Principles of Nonviolence) and how to apply them in current struggles against injustice. This training is valuable for cultivating the mindset and discipline required to sustain nonviolent campaigns, including techniques for emotional self-regulation and effective communication in tense situations.

**Nonviolence International, Training Resources:** Nonviolence International, a global network, compiles free resources for learning about nonviolent action ([Training Resources - Nonviolence International](#)). Their training archive includes manuals like “Beautiful Trouble” (a toolkit of creative activism tactics) and “Swarming: Scaling a Nonviolent Movement”. They also occasionally host webinars or workshops. Activists can find guides on everything from organizing a protest march to facilitating consensus in meetings, all based on peaceful movements worldwide.

### **CANVAS (Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies)**

**Workshops:** CANVAS, based in Serbia, has trained activists in dozens of countries in how to build successful movements. They have a core curriculum (available as a PDF) that provides a step-by-step guide to planning nonviolent struggle ([\[PDF\] CANVAS Core Curriculum: A Guide to Effective Nonviolent Struggle](#)) ([WEB-CANVAS Core Curriculum: A Guide to Effective Nonviolent Struggle](#)). While CANVAS trainings are often tailored to activists resisting authoritarian regimes abroad, the same strategic principles (unity, planning, nonviolent discipline) apply to American activists fighting encroachments on the Constitution. CANVAS operates with experienced trainers and has materials like “Nonviolent Struggle: 50 Crucial Points”, a handbook summarizing best practices. Reaching out to them or studying their published guides can significantly bolster one's strategic acumen.

**Civil Liberties Advocacy Training (ACLU webinars and others):** Organizations like the ACLU frequently hold “Know Your Rights” trainings for protesters and legal observer training for demonstrations ([Know Your Rights | Protesters' Rights - ACLU](#)) ([Right to protest - Amnesty International](#)). These teach citizens about their constitutional rights to speech, assembly, and petition, and how to respond if those rights are infringed during activism. Additionally, groups such as the National Lawyers Guild conduct Legal



Observer programs (to document police conduct at protests), and the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection (ICAP) has offered trainings on how local communities can lawfully prevent political violence. Tapping into these practical workshops ensures activists are legally prepared and confident while protesting or organizing.

**Websites & Toolkits: Albert Einstein Institution (AEI) Resource Library:** AEI (founded by Gene Sharp) offers many of its publications for free on its website. Notable resources include “198 Methods of Nonviolent Action” (listing tactics from protests to noncooperation) and the “Self-Liberation” toolkit, which is a workbook to help groups plan a nonviolent campaign specific to their situation. The AEI also has case studies of successful nonviolent movements that can inspire and instruct activists (e.g. how the Pinochet dictatorship was challenged in Chile, how solidarity was built in Poland’s struggle, etc.). These materials stress that nonviolent action is a learnable skill and provide concrete how-to guidance (198 Methods of Nonviolent Action , AEI/ Empowering Humankind).

**Everyday Democracy & Bridging Divides Initiatives:** Defending the Constitution often requires bridging partisan divides and facilitating tough conversations. Resources from groups like Everyday Democracy teach dialogue skills and community problem-solving in a way that can reduce polarization, important for building broad coalitions. The Bridging Divides Initiative (Princeton University) has tools for community leaders to counter political violence and extremism locally through communication and preparedness, all nonviolent.

**Rule of Law Education:** To deepen understanding, one can take online courses in constitutional law or American government (many universities offer free MOOCs on Coursera/edX). For instance, Yale’s “Constitutional Law” course or Harvard’s “American Government: Constitutional Foundations” can bolster one’s knowledge base. Likewise, the National Constitution Center offers interactive courses and town halls on constitutional issues, and its website has an Interactive Constitution where scholars from different viewpoints explain every clause. An informed activist can more convincingly advocate for constitutional fidelity and spot violations if they have this education.

In summary, **aspiring defenders of the Constitution should study both the content of the Constitution and the craft of nonviolent activism.** Combining these domains produces powerful advocates. A person who knows the First Amendment inside-out and has also read Gene Sharp or undergone Kingian nonviolence training will be well-equipped to lead a peaceful protest when free speech is threatened, for example. Utilizing the resources above, many of which are free or low-cost, will help individuals and groups sharpen their strategies, avoid pitfalls (like falling into violent traps or legal trouble), and connect with a broader community of practitioners. The most successful movements are those that learn from history and from each other, so continuous learning is itself a strategic act.

**The Rutherford Institute: Our job is to make the government play by the rules of the Constitution**

Other Essays by the authors of E Pluribus Unum:

Read our "Guide to Engaging in The Power of Real Political Talk". This guide is in our essay,

**The Infantilization of the American Citizen: Newspeak and The art of the Steal**

This essay gives a detailed account of how US citizen's freedom of speech has been weaponized for the purpose of stealing a nation. The guide contains seven steps to vastly improving our political talk.

Watch our video on how ad-hominem arguments (personal attacks) have ruined American political talk. This video is based on section 8 of the essay and relates to not using the six primary culture war words. (Republican, Democrat, Left, Right, Conservative, and Liberal)

**Avoiding Knowledge Through Irrelevant Gossip**

If you are a conservative, read our essay on how American conservatism is almost completely dead as a result of the culture war taking over our politics,

**"The Beauty of The Conservative Mind"**

The essay is a defining look at American Conservatism. This focuses on the importance, for American Conservatism, of actually knowing American heritage and allowing the legacies of heritage (not the opinions of culture warriors) to inform your politics.

"The great beauty of the conservative mind is that its thoughtful examination of life through the lens of its heritage makes possible the existence of genuinely conservative choices, which help to preserve the best of our past so that the people of today can have a better tomorrow."

- from: The Beauty of The Conservative Mind: Conservatism and the Examined Life

Conservatives must learn to dump their loyalty to politicians and parties into the trash and allow the greatest legacy of American heritage, the Constitution, to shape their political views and voting choices. Real American conservatism seeks to conserve American heritage!

## **Quotes of the Founding Fathers (and Lincoln)**

"The only maxim of a free government ought to be to trust no man living with power to endanger the public liberty."

-John Adams

"There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution."

-John Adams

"The liberties of our country, the freedom of our civil constitution, are worth defending against all hazards: And it is our duty to defend them against all attacks."

- Samuel Adams

"They who would give up an essential liberty for temporary security, deserve neither liberty nor security."

- Benjamin Franklin

"There is a certain enthusiasm in liberty that makes human nature rise above itself, in acts of bravery and heroism."

- Alexander Hamilton

"In questions of power, then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution."

- Thomas Jefferson

"A sacred respect for the constitutional law is the vital principle, the sustaining energy of a free government."

- Thomas Jefferson

"Don't interfere with anything in the Constitution. That must be maintained, for it is the only safeguard of our liberties."

- Abraham Lincoln

"We the people are the rightful masters of both Congress and the courts, not to overthrow the Constitution but to overthrow the men who pervert the Constitution."

- Abraham Lincoln

"It will be of little avail to the people that the laws are made by men of their own choice, if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood; if they be repealed or revised before they are promulgated, or undergo such incessant changes that no man who knows what the law is today can guess what

the law is tomorrow."  
- James Madison

"If the freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter."  
- George Washington

"Guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism"  
- George Washington

"Hold on, my friends, to the Constitution and to the Republic for which it stands. Miracles do not cluster, and what has happened once in 6,000 years, may not happen again. Hold on to the Constitution, because if the American Constitution should fail, there will be anarchy throughout the world."  
- Daniel Webster

### **Countering Anti-Constitution Arguments**

Anti-constitutional rhetoric is growing, and with it comes a disturbing wave of arguments suggesting that the Constitution no longer matters or should even be abolished entirely. While these arguments vary, most fall into predictable categories. Here are the most common justifications for dismissing or terminating the Constitution, along with brief counters that expose their dangerous flaws:

#### **1. "The Constitution Is Outdated, It Was Written for a Different Time."**

##### **Claim:**

The Constitution was drafted in 1787, before the internet, modern warfare, or today's social complexities.

The Founders couldn't anticipate the complexities of digital privacy, globalized economies, or modern social issues.

##### **Counter:**

The Constitution is not a static document, it was designed to adapt through amendments (Article V).

Principles like due process, free speech, and checks and balances are timeless, providing a foundation to address new challenges. All of the rights and freedoms you will lose are listed above in the essay under the section title "You will lose every right and freedom."

The Fourteenth Amendment wasn't part of the original Constitution; we amended it to meet evolving needs. We can do the same today without tearing down the entire structure.

## **2. "We Need a Strong Leader, Not a Complicated System."**

### **Claim:**

Democratic processes are too slow. We need a leader who can act decisively without being constrained by constitutional checks and balances.

Some argue that gridlock in Congress shows that the Constitutional system is broken.

### **Counter:**

History proves this logic leads to tyranny. Germany's Weimar Republic embraced this mindset in the 1930s.

"Strong leaders" without constitutional restraints always end up consolidating personal power at the expense of the people's liberty.

The Constitution slows power down intentionally to protect individual freedoms from authoritarian impulses.

## **3. "The People Don't Care About the Constitution Anymore."**

### **Claim:**

Civics education has collapsed; most Americans can't name their rights or how government works.

If the public no longer values the Constitution, why keep it?

### **Counter:**

Ignorance does not equal irrelevance. A population uninformed about gravity wouldn't make gravity irrelevant, it would make education more critical.

The decline in civic knowledge is not an argument for abandoning constitutional principles; it's an urgent call to restore constitutional literacy.

## **4. "The Constitution Was Written by Flawed Men, So Why Trust It?"**

### **Claim:**

The Founders were products of their time, many were slaveholders, and none lived in a truly diverse democracy.

Therefore, the Constitution is inherently tainted and unworthy of trust.

### **Counter:**

The Constitution's core principles, liberty, equality, and self-governance, have empowered countless marginalized groups to demand inclusion and justice.

The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Nineteenth, and Twenty-Sixth Amendments prove the system's ability to correct past injustices

If we tear it down rather than reform it, we lose the only mechanism we have to protect those gains.

The early debates over the Constitution demonstrated that our founding fathers and framers could discuss with more rationality, logic, and integrity than all of the overly emotional culture warrior politicians put together.

## **5. "Corporate and Political Elites Already Ignore the Constitution, so Why Should We Care?"**

### **Claim:**

Special interests dominate politics. The rule of law is unevenly applied. If the Constitution doesn't protect us equally, it's already dead.

### **Counter:**

The Constitution is not self-enforcing, it depends on citizen vigilance.

Corruption and constitutional violations must be challenged through legal channels, elections, and public activism, not by destroying the foundation of liberty.

Cynicism is exactly what tyrants rely on to convince the public to abandon their rights.

## **6. "The Constitution Stands in the Way of Progress."**

### **Claim:**

The Constitution's checks and balances make passing bold reforms nearly impossible.

National emergencies require fast action, which the Constitution slows down.

### **Counter:**

Fast, unchecked governmental power is the hallmark of every historical authoritarian regime.

The Constitution's deliberate pace forces negotiation, compromise, and deliberation, ensuring policies reflect the will of the people, not just transient passions.

When we've needed rapid action, like during wartime or the Civil Rights era, the system adapted without destroying the constitutional framework.

## **7. "We Need a New Constitution for Modern America."**

### **Claim:**

The U.S. needs a new founding document to address contemporary realities like climate

change, tech monopolies, and systemic inequality. Get rid of the Constitution and write something completely new.

**Counter:**

A constitutional convention would unleash chaos, with every political faction demanding new powers.

We risk losing core freedoms like speech, assembly, and due process in the bargaining process.

The Constitution's amendment process already allows for modernization, without inviting the total dismantling of our liberties.

**Final Analysis:**

The Constitution is under attack not because it's obsolete, but because it works. It limits power-hungry politicians, demands accountability, and protects the people's rights. Those who seek its end are often the same forces who would benefit most from unchecked authority. Abandon the Constitution, and we abandon American heritage itself, trading hard-won liberty for the seductive false promise of simplicity and control.

**A Dialogue Version of Countering  
*Anti-Constitution Arguments***

**Dialogue on the Constitution:**

**Patriot:** Friend, I sense that you have doubts about our Constitution. May I ask why?

**Doubter:** It's outdated. It was written centuries ago, long before the internet, global economies, or modern warfare. How can it possibly address today's complexities?

**Patriot:** Ah, I see. Would you consider a craftsman who builds a solid foundation for a home wise or foolish?

**Doubter:** Wise, of course.

**Patriot:** And does a well-built foundation remain strong even as the house is remodeled and updated?

**Doubter:** Yes, if properly built.

**Patriot:** Did you know that the Constitution, much like that foundation, was designed precisely to support necessary changes over time through amendments, the Fifth Article provides us with an Amendment process, and an example is the Fourteenth Amendment, which addressed issues unimaginable in 1787. Would you agree?

**Doubter:** Yes.

**Patriot:** And do you not agree that principles like due process, free speech, and checks and balances are timeless, providing a foundation to address new challenges.

**Doubter:** Yes, but even so, our government has become slow, bogged down by this complicated system. We need decisive leaders, not endless debates and checks and balances.

**Patriot:** Consider, then, a physician who carefully deliberates before surgery, ensuring no unnecessary harm occurs. Would you prefer this careful physician or one who acts

quickly without checks?

**Doubter:** Clearly, the careful one.

**Patriot:** Indeed. History shows us what happens when decisive action is unrestrained: the Weimar Republic turned swiftly into tyranny under a decisive but unchecked leader. The Constitution's separation of powers expressed in the first three articles, which comprise most of the text of the Constitution, protects our liberty from such hasty impulses. Do you think this protection matters? **Doubter:** Being in a rush that causes harm is bad, but does it matter if most people today don't even care about the Constitution? Civic education has collapsed, and many can't even name their rights. If people no longer value it, why keep it?

**Patriot:** If sailors forgot how to navigate their ship, would we conclude that navigation is obsolete, or rather that sailors must relearn the lost skill?

**Doubter:** Of course, they would need to relearn.

**Patriot:** Precisely. Ignorance doesn't make the Constitution irrelevant, it makes education more critical than ever. Shouldn't we restore constitutional literacy rather than discard the compass that guides us?

**Doubter:** Knowledge is important. Yet, even if people knew it, the Constitution was written by deeply flawed men, some owned slaves, none lived in our diverse, modern society. How can we trust something created under such circumstances?

**Patriot:** Tell me, friend, if a blacksmith crafts a sturdy blade, does the blade's worth diminish if we later discover faults in the blacksmith's character?

**Doubter:** No, the blade remains useful.

**Patriot:** Likewise, our Constitution's core ideals, liberty, equality, self-governance, remain powerful tools, precisely because they allowed us to correct past injustices through amendments like the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Nineteenth, and Twenty-Sixth. Should we not use these tools to continue improving rather than discard them entirely?

**Doubter:** I have no argument against improving it. But special interests and corrupt political elites already disregard the Constitution. It doesn't equally protect everyone. Isn't it already failing?

**Patriot:** Consider the law itself, does a law enforce itself, or must citizens remain vigilant, holding leaders accountable through elections, legal challenges, and activism?

**Doubter:** **Citizens must remain vigilant.** **Patriot:** Exactly. If your home's roof leaked, would you abandon your entire home, or would you repair it to protect your shelter?

**Doubter:** I would repair it.

**Patriot:** Then we must repair, not abandon, our constitutional home. Cynicism only aids those who would strip away our rights. Isn't active vigilance preferable to surrender?

**Doubter:** Yes. Still, the Constitution often seems to block progress. Checks and balances slow crucial reforms. We face emergencies that demand rapid response.

**Patriot:** True, but consider music, does correct harmony arise from rushing, or from the careful tuning of the instruments that deliver the music?

**Doubter:** From careful tuning, naturally.

**Patriot:** Likewise, our Constitution's deliberate pace compels negotiation, ensuring laws reflect the enduring will of the people, not fleeting passions. When urgent action was needed, as in wartime or during the Civil Rights movement, the Constitution adapted without collapse. Should we discard an instrument proven adaptable?

**Doubter:** Maybe we simply need a new Constitution altogether, one built for modern



challenges like climate change, tech monopolies, and systemic inequality. Perhaps it's time to start fresh.

**Patriot:** Imagine, friend, tearing down your well-built home completely, trusting diverse factions to agree upon building a better one without conflict. Do you foresee harmony or chaos in such a scenario?

**Doubter:** Likely chaos.

**Patriot:** Precisely. A constitutional convention today could risk our fundamental rights, free speech, assembly, due process, in battles between competing interests. Yet, the amendment process already allows thoughtful modernization without destroying our liberties. Is not thoughtful renovation safer than demolition?

## **How to Recognize Useless and Harmful Political Talk**

In order to reform our political talk from the distractions of culture war rhetoric into thoughtful, productive dialogue that serves the nation, we must first learn to recognize our errors—not wear them like badges of honor. We must trade noise for understanding. Emotion without clarity for conviction grounded in reason. Shouting for listening. Mockery for humility. Loyalty to tribe for loyalty to truth. Empty slogans for meaningful substance. Division for principled unity. Blind confidence for teachable courage. And most of all, we must exchange the pursuit of winning at all costs for the shared responsibility of preserving the republic. Only then can our words begin to heal what our politics has broken. We can easily recognize when our political talk has gone wrong...

### **1. When it's about blaming personalities, not policies:**

Imagine a contractor trying to fix your roof by complaining about other contractors instead of actually talking about how to fix the roof. Would you trust the one who rants, or the one who goes straight to talking about the structure of the problem? Do you want blaming or genuine reasoning about the problem? Political talk that obsesses over personalities, who's a "hero" or a "villain", isn't fixing anything. It's theater, not governance. If your plumber comes to fix a leak and spends an hour blaming the previous plumber instead of stopping the water, would you pay him? Blame is easy; solutions are hard. If political talk is 90% blame and 10% substance, you're listening to someone who wants attention, not answers.

### **2. When one-word labels replace real thinking:**

Would you let a mechanic say your engine is "bad" without explaining why? Or let a doctor say your condition is "weird" and send you home? No, real professionals diagnose with clarity. So when someone says "woke," "socialist," or "conservative" like it's a diagnosis, without explaining the specifics, you're not hearing politics, you're hearing lazy, empty noise. The most popularly used culture war labels work like a replacement for thinking. An excellent way to avoid this error in our political talk is to discuss issues and solutions directly as we would with any practical art or trade. If we give up using the most commonly used reason and conversation killing terms: Republican, Democrat, left, right, conservative, and liberal, we free ourselves to focus on the values, goals, and principles we share in the Constitution. We can focus on the

issues directly, hearing deeply, reasoning powerfully, and serving our nation productively.

**3. When outrage takes the place of evidence:**

Imagine a chef shouting at a recipe instead of learning to cook. In politics, yelling louder doesn't make your argument stronger, it just makes it harder for others to think clearly. Real solutions are built with facts, not fury. If someone is always angry but never explains, look past the volume and ask for the reason.

**4. When people act like disagreement is treason:**

In music, harmony only happens when different notes work together. A band where everyone plays the same note isn't music, it's noise. A political system without disagreement is a dictatorship. If someone can't handle dissent, they're not defending democracy, they're afraid of it.

**5. When you're told it's an "us vs. them" world:**

In sports, you compete on the field but shake hands after the game. In politics, citizens aren't enemies, we're teammates trying to make the country work. If someone treats all disagreement like war, they've forgotten that in a republic, **We the People** includes people we disagree with.

**6. When questions are dismissed, not answered:**

If an electrician refused to explain why your power's out and just said, "Don't question me," would you hire him again? Then don't trust political voices who mock your curiosity. In real problem-solving, questions are how we get to truth, not a threat to it. Refusing to answer questions is not political talk, it is **intellectual and political cowardice dressed as authority, and it's how deception hides in plain sight.**

**7. When the solution always fits the ideology, not the problem:** You wouldn't trust a doctor who prescribed the same pill to everyone, no matter the illness. Yet some political voices offer the same talking points, no matter the issue. Real-world problems need tailor-made solutions, not one-size-fits-all rhetoric.

**8. When political talk leads you to ridicule others instead of seeking solutions:**

Imagine an art teacher who spends the whole class mocking other styles instead of teaching you how to paint. That's what culture war talk does, it teaches contempt, not competence. If a voice makes you hate your neighbor but can't explain the issues, solutions, and the Constitution, they're not leading you, they're using you.

**9. When you feel more entertained than informed:**

Politics isn't supposed to be your favorite reality show. If the person you're listening to is more performer than public servant, more sizzle than substance, you're not learning about your country, you're being distracted from it. Freedom requires thought, not applause.

**10. When tone matters more than truth:**

If a plumber speaks with confidence but leaves your pipes leaking, you don't praise his delivery, you demand a fix. In politics, a calm tone or fiery passion doesn't make something right. Truth isn't a performance, it's verified, not felt.

**11. When they say “this is just common sense” but offer no evidence:**

Imagine a pilot claiming it's “common sense” to ignore instruments during turbulence. That's not wisdom, it's a crash waiting to happen. In political talk, “common sense” without reasoning is often just **assumption with swagger**. Ask for proof.

**12. When slogans replace solutions:**

Would you trust a nutritionist who told you to “Just eat clean” with no idea what that means? Slogans like “take back our country” or “build back better” sound good, but without substance, they're fog machines for the mind, loud, dramatic, and designed to obscure, not reveal. Don't chase the slogan, **chase the structure of the issue: the facts, causes, and constitutional principles that actually shape the problem**. Slogans might stir emotion, but only structure reveals what's broken and how to fix it.

**13. When they demonize compromise:**

If two carpenters argue over blueprints and refuse to meet in the middle, the house never gets built. Compromise isn't surrender, it's construction. If someone calls every compromise a betrayal, they're not building anything, they're just burning bridges.

**14. When “winning” matters more than governing:**

You wouldn't trust a surgeon who celebrates winning the argument in the operating room more than saving the patient. If political talk is obsessed with “owning” the other side, it's not about solving problems, it's about ego. That's not leadership, it's performance art. Any conversation driven more by the hunger to win than the desire to understand is a conversation unworthy of a free republic. Only conversations that seek clarity, common ground, and the good of the whole can truly serve a nation founded on liberty and reason.

**15. When the speaker never admits uncertainty:**

Even a skilled mechanic sometimes says, “I need to take a closer look.” Real expertise includes humility. If a political voice never admits doubt, never revises their view, and claims total certainty on every issue, they're selling certainty, not offering wisdom or meaningful solutions grounded in reality.

**16. When morality is weaponized instead of lived:**

If a pastor preaches forgiveness but lives in vengeance, you question his integrity. In politics, if someone talks virtue while mocking, dehumanizing, or humiliating others, their morality is a mask. Real principles are lived, not leveraged.

**Bottom Line:**

If a political conversation doesn't feel like solving a problem with a good mechanic, an

honest teacher, a clear-eyed doctor, or a skilled craftsman, then we are not hearing politics. We're hearing propaganda. **It is much better to talk about the political issues of the nation in the same way we know we would have to talk about our work rather than use the issue avoiding culture war style of political talk.** We don't fix a roof by yelling at the rain. We don't diagnose a patient by blaming another doctor. We don't finish a lesson plan by mocking the students who don't already understand. In every useful trade, whether we're tuning an engine, laying a foundation, repairing a circuit, or caring for the sick, We focus on the structure of the problem, not the personality of the person next to us. We use real vocabulary, ask real questions, and listen for real answers. That's what responsible problem solvers do when something matters. And politics matters. So if our political talk doesn't sound like the kind of serious, respectful, problem-solving conversation we would have in our profession or craft, it's not helping our country, it's just helping someone else sell us noise.

To restore American greatness, we must restore how we talk, **with facts, patience, humility, and a shared commitment to the Constitution.** That's how real citizens speak. That's how free people govern.

**We must end the culture war style of political talk, not tomorrow, not gradually, but now.** A free people cannot govern themselves through insults, slogans, and tribal outrage. Like a wise teacher guiding through questions, a doctor diagnosing with clarity, or a skilled craftsman solving with precision, we must approach our national problems by focusing on their structure, rooted in principles, governed by the Constitution, and directed toward unity, speaking not to inflame, but to understand and repair.

The work of citizenship demands more than noise, it demands understanding. Making America Great Again requires more than emotion, it requires the courage to think clearly, the humility to listen deeply with courtesy, and the discipline to speak with purpose. It calls us to rise above the noise, to ground our debates in knowledge, and to measure every idea against the enduring light of the Constitution. Only then can we reclaim a politics worthy of a free and united people. It is time to raise the standard, to reject the shallow theater of division and return to the discipline of reasoned dialogue.

**We can make America great by making our political talk great!** Let us be citizens again, not partisans, not performers, but Americans first, bound in the unity of our citizenship by a common heritage and a sacred duty to preserve what was entrusted to us. In a world trying to tear itself apart with words, let us choose to rebuild, with political talk that is worthy.

For a detailed write-up on how our Political talk has been corrupted, see our essay:

[The Infantilization of The American Citizen: Newspeak and the Art of The Steal](#)  
by Max Maxwell and Melete

# **The Infantilization of the American Citizen: Newspeak and The Art of The Steal**

by  
**Max Maxwell and Melete**

## **Introduction / Abstract**

The dark and terrifying descriptions of the absolute thought control of an authoritarian dictatorship in George Orwell's novel *1984* gave rise to our use of the adjective "Orwellian". Here are three illustrative quotes from the novel *1984*:

"Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it."

"The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness."

"In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it. It was inevitable that they should make that claim sooner or later: the logic of their position demanded it. Not merely the validity of experience, but the very existence of external reality was tacitly denied by their philosophy. The heresy of heresies was common sense."<sup>[1]</sup>

The novel *1984* is about the fictional government of "Big Brother", whose use of a language called *Newspeak*<sup>[2]</sup> helped to destroy the people's capacity to reason about social and political issues. We will demonstrate that the treatment of language and thought in George Orwell's *1984* is highly relevant to understanding the United States' most devastating political problems. The most severe U.S. political problems can be understood and solved through a few easy to comprehend truths about our use of language and our capacity to reason. The truth is that the people of the United States are well practiced at solving daily problems through the ordinary use of language and reason. This truth tells us that the most powerfully effective political reform in the United States is solidly in the hands of the people.

Our essay will offer a simple perspective on the central importance of knowledge, reason, and honesty in language and thought concerning its relevance for the reform of politics and the freedom of speech in the United States. We will illustrate the dystopian character of U.S. politics by comparing the Newspeak language from George Orwell's *1984* with the dominant model of public political talk in the United States. We will then contrast our dystopian political obsession with making false claims of knowledge in U.S. political talk with Plato's presentation of the importance of honesty about our own ignorance in order to light up the path citizens must take to reclaim the power of their freedom of speech. We present our solution in the *Guide to Engaging in*

*The Power of Real Political Talk* that follows. There we show how a common-sense implementation of Socrates' ideal of a useful conversation is all that is necessary for the people to overthrow decades of Orwellian propaganda. To reform U.S. politics, *We The People* need to reform how we talk about politics in the United States. The functioning of knowledge, reason, and honesty within the expression of our freedom of speech are powerful tools that must be restored to popular use in political talk if *We The People* of the United States will ever be able to reclaim a stolen nation.

### **Subverting Reason and The Theft of a Nation**

In every nation, among every people, and in every historical period time, the vast majority of humans have given the thoughtfulness of their minds, the depth of their hearts, and the sweat of their labor unto the last breath in order to survive and thrive in life. The most fundamental truth, which underlies the most serious political problems in the United States, is that there will always be thieves who will gladly steal the fruit of the people's labor. This process of stealing has some essential truths we must consider. The first truth is that people do not want you to take from them what does not belong to you. The second truth is that stealing from the unwilling must involve at least one of two kinds of force. *Brute force and subversive force are the avenues of action involved when a thief steals from the unwilling.* In the absence of the power to steal by simple, physical, brute force, those who want to feed off other human beings like a thieving vampire must subvert the will and power of their victims in order to gain their duped cooperation to the theft.

The most fundamental truth that repeats over and over in the course of subverting the will of people is the absolute necessity of disabling their powers of reasoning. You cannot steal through subversion if you do not undermine your victim's powers of reasoning. *The tactic of stripping people of their ability to reason effectively about political and social issues is the thieving method of choice in the United States.* The ambition of wealthy powers is to steal as much as possible from every aspect of existence. The U.S. political and media organizations, which are owned and controlled by wealthy powers dedicated to the goal of taking as much as possible from the people, have evolved an Orwellian model of public discourse that functions to destroy the people's ability to reason in order to facilitate the theft of a nation. *The subversion of the reasoning powers of the citizens of the United States is the topic of this essay.*

The subversive model of public discourse favored by political and media entities can be described as Orwellian because the model conforms to the purpose and operational principles of George Orwell's vision of Newspeak from his novel 1984. In 1984, the people's capacity to reason is attacked by avoiding real knowledge through editing the nation's literature and history, reducing the vocabulary of their language, and limiting the full range of perspectives available to their minds. Orwell's Newspeak sought to greatly reduce the number of vocabulary words necessary to communicate ideas. The design of Newspeak also sought to reduce the diversity of perspectives available to the people so they could only express state-approved perspectives. This also added to the effect of avoiding real knowledge because of the inability of newspeak to express nuances of

meaning necessary to articulate accurate knowledge. The reduction of vocabulary and perspectives in Orwell's Newspeak, combined with deliberately depriving the people of correct knowledge through editing their history, was implemented to make it impossible to reason effectively on political and social issues. The U.S. version of dystopian political talk also avoids real knowledge, reduces vocabulary, and limits the full range of possible perspectives so that the people will be ineffective in their reasoning about social and political issues.

Our habits of public political talk can also be described as Orwellian because it depends on government and business forces convincing people to defy their own common sense and knowledge. Convincing the people to say and do that, which our own experience of life and shared common sense tells us is just plain wrong, has become the great Orwellian theme of U.S. politics. The extraordinary dominance of the Orwellian model of U.S. political discourse is, in all practical effect, a political lobotomy on the minds of the citizens of the United States. If the people cannot reason effectively about political and social issues, they can have no effective influence on the nation's politics. In the absence of asserting our powers of reasoning, we give permission to thieves to have their way in U.S. politics. The dominant Orwellian model of U.S. public discourse so effectively prevents people from reasoning about political issues that it is killing the nation. The democratic republic of the United States cannot survive if the people have given up on reasoning effectively and talking productively about the political issues involved in governing the nation. We The People have a responsibility to express our capacity to reason about the public good of the nation.

In the United States, corporations and wealthy special interests, political parties, and corporately owned media outlets have been working very hard for many decades to subvert the people's will into a stupor of irrational compliance with the wealthy powers' ambition to steal as much as possible. A few examples, which illustrate the fact that taking what does not belong to you is the favorite habit of wealthy business interests, are:

wage theft (when employers steal from employees) of almost 40 billion dollars a year, businesses deceiving customers with unjustified stealth fees; lying about the quantity, quality, or price of products and services; predatory loan practices that obscure the truth to rip off borrowers; ignoring requests to cancel services; people held hostage to absurdly high college costs (increasing at twice the rate of inflation); banks opening accounts for customers without permission and charging them for it; the high cost and relative ineffectiveness of the U.S. healthcare system; companies skimping on consumer safety and the quality of products to maximize profit; restaurants using thicker glass to give less beer than advertised; the price of a life-saving drug going up 5000% for no reason other than that they can get away with it; big businesses extorting tax breaks from local governments in order to locate there.

These examples show the theft of resources. The theft of a nation is more than stealing cash. In order to steal as much as possible, the three branches of the United States government must be corrupted to serve the interests of the wealthy powers.

Corrupting the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government are the primary goals that must be achieved so that the writing and interpretation of the nation's laws are unfairly influenced to favor corporations and the wealthiest 1%. The result is that our democratic republic, in which Congress was supposed to represent the people, is transformed into a plutocratic oligarchy where Congress is a group of paid employees of the wealthiest business interests. Expressions of this corrupting influence are:

disproportionate tax cuts for the rich; eliminating corporate liability; corporate representatives placed in positions of oversight, slap-on-the-wrist fines instead of putting CEO's and board members in jail; undoing laws restricting unfair or corrupt financial practices; and other legislation that disproportionately benefits the wealthy powers while placing extra burdens on the poor.

Corrupting the three branches of government is more than the theft of cash. It is the loss of a nation. When the people are effectively excluded from political decisions, the poor get crushed, the middle class disappears, and the wealthiest powers pig-out on an ill-gotten feast of gargantuan proportions. However, in "the land of the free", wealthy business interests cannot simply take by brute force. In order for the thieving habits of U.S. corporate and wealthy special interests to be so successful, there must be an effective subversion of the people's will.

This essay will expose the subversive habits of popular U.S. political talk, which make the theft of a nation possible by destroying the people's capacity to reason. By understanding how the collapse of public reasoning on politics in the U.S. serves to hand over the nation to thieves, we will also understand the pathway that the citizens of the United States must travel in order to regain their political power as citizens and the rightful leaders of a democratic republic.

Thieves love to steal candy from babies because it is easy. The dominant model of public discourse on politics has been deliberately shaped to infantilize the citizens of the United States in order to make them the ideal victims of larceny on the grandest scale. Almost all public political talk in the United States is an exercise in the art of reducing a population of thinking adults to distracted babies. When stealing through subversion, adult knowledge and adult reasoning is the enemy. It is difficult to subversively steal from knowledgeable people, who are in the habit of giving due diligence to their adult responsibility to express their capacity to reason about issues. The thieves must sabotage the people's relationship to knowledge and reasoning in order to steal through the subversion of their political will. The number one tactic for the goal of compromising knowledge depends on lies. In order to subversively steal as much as possible, the people's reliance on knowledge and their willingness to be honest about their knowledge must be destroyed. Human well being must be compromised in order for the activities of the subversive thief to be profitable. Knowledge, reasoning, and honesty are universally necessary to all human beings' survival and health, which is why they are the number one target of attack when the theft of a nation relies on subversive force.



## **Knowledge, Reason, and Honesty are The Foundation of All Human Good**

The idea that knowledge, reason, and honesty are necessary for all human good is not a fancy philosophical theory, a mystical religious proclamation, or a partisan ploy. This idea stands up for all human beings and substantiates itself through a simple confrontation with our own common sense. Everyone already knows that the acquisition of knowledge and the use of reason are absolutely essential for human survival. Nobody is born knowing how to tie their shoes, how to screw in a light bulb, or how to bring wisdom to stressful circumstances. We learn everything we need and learn how to reason about what we know. As we gain knowledge and develop our capacity to reason, we improve the chances of our survival. The ability to recognize our knowledge and to honestly refer to facts is the human prerequisite for our capacity to reason. In the complete absence of usable knowledge, humanity dies. A human being that literally never learns anything is a human being who is incapable of surviving into adulthood. *The essential point of understanding in this essay is that knowledge, reason, and honesty are necessary to realize or use any good in life.* In order to think further about this, consider freedom.

Perhaps the most discussed and manipulated concept in U.S. politics, which pertains to the subject of living well, is the ideal of freedom. That some measure of freedom is good for human living is undisputed. However, in the absence of the ability to honestly recognize our knowledge, the concept of freedom becomes absurd. What good is the freedom to choose to make yourself a cup of tea if you do not know how to do it, and nobody will tell you the facts you need to get it done? How can our freedom be well if we strive mightily towards building a good life while remaining ignorant of what is good in living? What good is the freedom to choose your destination if you do not know where you should go? What good is the freedom of speech if we are negligent and allow the quality of our speech to be harmful or do not know what to say at all? And if freedom includes the capacity to choose what we ought to do, we cannot be free if we do not have the knowledge we need to guide our choices. The importance of acquiring knowledge, the expression of honesty about our knowledge, and our capacity to reason are essential to the functioning life of all human beings. Freedom is absolutely no good in the absence of the knowledge and reason needed to make it stand up and live. And if we are not able or willing to honestly refer to the facts of our knowledge, then knowledge is useless. Therefore, telling the truth about our knowledge is as necessary to freedom and to every other good of life as knowledge itself.

In George Orwell's novel *1984*, the protagonist Winston Smith, who worked in the "Ministry of Truth", writes in his secret and illegal diary where he records his thought crimes. Smith defines freedom in a way that lights up the importance of being able to tell the truth about what we know.

"Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."[3]

This definition of freedom is significant in the novel because if Big Brother (Smith's government) said that  $2+2=5$ , you would be forced to believe it. The idea of forcing human beings to believe and act in ways that are opposed to their own honest understanding is not new with the novel *1984*. Hermann Göring, one of the most powerful figures in the Nazi party, said, "If the Führer wants it, two and two makes five!"[4] There is no substitute for the freedom to tell the truth about our knowledge. The ability to honestly recognize our knowledge is fundamentally necessary to human life. Our ability to tell the truth about our knowledge is the beginning of all possibilities of freedom. When we lose the ability to tell the truth, we lose the power to be free.

Knowledge, reason, and honesty have a similar bearing on everything we consider to be good in life. Without knowledge, reason, and honesty, humans cease to function well. We cannot realize our freedom or any other good in life without our capacity to reason about our knowledge. Our knowledge, reason, and honesty are needed to make all possible good in human life accessible and expressible. So it is that the primary tactic in subversion based theft is, by definition, the destruction of knowledge, reason, and honesty. The goal of destroying the people's reliance on knowledge, reason, and honesty is a blueprint for the dominant Orwellian model of political discourse in the United States.

### **The Function of Knowledge and Honesty in The Structure of Reasoning**

The process of reasoning is continuously in use in the daily life of a human being. We cannot fulfill even the smallest goal or desire in the complete absence of our ability to reason. Whether we are executing a plan to make breakfast, making an important life decision, or fixing a nation's problems, our ability to reason is the road upon which we all must travel to succeed at anything. There are no exceptions. Reasoning is like breathing to the conscious life of a human being. The unreasoning mind suffocates in the decay of its own stagnation. Without the ability to reason, we die. The process of reasoning is active when we are making sense of our environment, working out how to fulfill a purpose, responding to a desire, interpreting data, or analyzing the structure of an idea or argument. To disrupt a person's ability to reason about a particular issue is to deprive them of any power of influence on that issue.

In the complete absence of knowledge, reasoning is impossible. Any process of reasoning requires data. The facts of our knowledge make up the data, which empowers our reasoning. This data is the ground of all meaning in the human mind. The facts of our knowledge allow us to make associations, formulate premises, and determine conclusions. Reasoning without any knowledge at all is like a car without gas. You can't even turn it on. Even when our "facts" are nothing more than false beliefs, our false beliefs function to empower the process of reasoning because we use false beliefs in the same way we use true facts. *It is the one who has no knowledge or beliefs at all, who has no power of reasoning at all.*

The difference between "true facts" and "false beliefs" is often non-existent during the process of reasoning itself. Whether we are reasoning about the data of our verified knowledge or reasoning about what we merely believe to be true, both cases function with the same dynamic in the reasoning process. However, when it comes to the results of our reasoning and the actions we take in response to our reasoning, the difference between true facts and false beliefs can be like night and day, life and death. During a process of reasoning about an issue, the belief that  $2+2=5$  is no different than if we know that  $2+2=4$ . The process of reasoning can often function in the same way with false beliefs as it does with true facts. However, any conclusion or action that absolutely depends on the correct result of 4 will not be successful if you give it the result five. In our reasoning about an issue, we can rationally interpret the available data, make good associations based on the data, construct useful premises, and draw apt conclusions to make a valid argument. Yet, if the data that we "know" about the issue is false, this affects the outcome even if it does not affect the process. Our argument can still be well reasoned and logically valid with false data, even if it is not sound or true.

The sharpest line of attack in subverting the reasoning of the people is to corrupt the data they must depend on in their reasoning. Supplying the people with misleading or false information and denying people the full depth of information they need to think clearly is the common behavior of the corporate media and the political parties. Encouraging bad habits of conversation that disable the people's reliance on their knowledge of the issues is the primary set of tactics that the corporate media and political parties use to dupe the people into cooperating in their own disempowerment.

All of our talk about honesty in this essay has a defined and limited scope. In a larger cultural context, honesty has a very broad scope of moral considerations that must be set aside for our purposes. Relative to its relationship to knowledge and reason, think of honesty merely in terms of accuracy and connectivity. Honesty is the cognitive connective tissue that holds our knowledge and reasoning together. It is difficult enough to vet facts without adding another layer of distortion because we are deceiving ourselves or are lying to others. We are not making a claim that we must always be honest. Sometimes people have good moral reasons to lie. Imagine a killer is at your door and asks you to reveal the location of the person they want to kill. Do you tell them the truth? If an extremely emotionally sensitive person asks you about their new horrible looking hairdo, do you tell them the truth on the day of their wedding?

In this essay, we are not seeking to define in what limited scope we are morally obligated to be honest. We are setting aside moral considerations all together in favor of a non-moral focus on the function of honesty as the connection between knowledge and reason. When honesty works to connect and transform our knowledge and reasoning into a functioning whole, the scope of the necessary honesty is always relevant to the subject and purpose of our reasoning. If the topic is the economy, our reasoning about the impact of raising interest rates would require that we are knowledgeable about the issue and honest to ourselves and any other person reasoning with us about the facts involved. However, this does not require a person to be honest with a spouse about one's relationship. Dishonesty on a personal matter does not necessarily affect our

reasoning about other issues. It is possible for a judge to be meticulously honest in her judicial ethics on legal issues and in her reflections on the Constitution while being a dishonest mess in some other area of her life without affecting the integrity of her judicial reasoning.

Dishonesty can also be part of the context of useful reasoning. When deciding if we should be honest and tell a killer where he can find the person he wants to kill, we may recognize that lying could serve a knowledgeable, rational, even noble, purpose. If we choose to save a life, we can incorporate lying to the killer, *who is not reasoning with us about anything*, while being honest to ourselves about why we are lying. However, suppose we are reasoning with another person cooperatively. In that case, we must be honest about our motivations, about our focus on the agreed-upon subject, and about the facts of our own knowledge in order for our reasoning together to be optimally productive. All processes of cooperative reasoning require this kind of honesty. Destroying the power of the people to reason by disabling their reliance on knowledge and honesty is the core focus of the most popular model of U.S. political talk.

### **Orwell's Newspeak and The U.S. Brand of Orwellian Talk**

We do not claim that those with the power to shape our political conversations in the United States have self-consciously modeled their work on Orwell's Newspeak. What has happened instead is that the ordinary human practice of stealing through subversion always focuses on the necessary destruction of human reasoning powers. It just so happens that this focus matches the purpose and operational principles of Orwell's treatment of language and thought in his novel *1984*. The philosophy behind the Newspeak language in Orwell's *1984*, which was created by the government of Oceania[5] to help destroy the people's ability to reason about political and social issues, provides a vivid illustration of the fact that our habits of political talk in the U.S. have reached dystopian levels of harmfulness.

The dark truth is that Orwell's vision of Newspeak is an amateur hour of wasteful incompetence compared to the efficient and systematic destruction of the people's capacity to reason, which has already occurred in the United States. Before detailing how the dystopian virtues of U.S. political talk vastly outperform Orwell's vision, let's examine the Newspeak language in Orwell's novel *1984*.

Orwell's Newspeak in *1984* is linguistically unrealistic and functioned through an impossible level of the control of printed language resources. Newspeak's purpose of destroying the practice of reasoning through the minimization of vocabulary and reduction of the diversity of perspectives functions through the physical means of creating a Newspeak dictionary that would replace the old language. In addition to the dictionary, rewriting all literature and historical materials in the Newspeak language, destroying state rejected printed materials in "memory holes" (incineration), and altering the inscriptions and structures of historical architecture and artifacts completed the

physical control of language and knowledge. The reduction of vocabulary in Newspeak was intended to eliminate the full complexity of thought and the full range of possible perspectives by removing shades of meaning. The possibility of nuanced thought is eliminated along with the vocabulary in order to secure the absolute dominance of simplistic dichotomies in the people's use of language (good vs. *ungood*, pleasure vs. pain, *goodthink* vs. *crimethink*). The acceptance of oversimplifying dichotomies helps the people submit to a reduction of the range of perspectives available to their thinking. The purpose of *newspeak* and Orwell's overall handling of language and thought in *1984* is to make it impossible for people to independently think socially or politically beyond repeating state approved ideas. Compliance was enforced with omnipresent surveillance and torture.

Here are some illustrative quotes from *1984* that gives us a glimpse of Newspeak in Orwell's own words:

An acquaintance of Winston Smith comments on the process of reducing vocabulary:

"You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words—scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We're cutting the language down to the bone"[6]

The use of fewer words in Newspeak will replace the normal habits of vocabulary use:

"Countless other words such as honor, justice, morality, internationalism, democracy, science, and religion had simply ceased to exist. A few blanket words covered them, and, in covering them, abolished them."[7]

Regarding the purpose of the reduction of vocabulary in Newspeak, Orwell wrote:

"Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten."[8]

The literature and documentation of the past are either destroyed through translation into Newspeak:

"The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be."[9]

Or the literature and documentation of the past would be destroyed through burning:

"In the walls of the cubicle there were three orifices...This last (orifice) was for the disposal of wastepaper. Similar slits existed in thousands or tens of thousands throughout the building, not only in every room but at short intervals in every corridor. For some reason they were nicknamed memory holes. When one knew that any document was due for destruction, or even when one saw a scrap of wastepaper lying about, it was an automatic action to lift the flap of the nearest memory hole and drop it in, whereupon it would be whirled away on a current of warm air to the enormous furnaces which were hidden somewhere in the recesses of the building."[10]

The absolute control of printed resources to limit the use of vocabulary and reduce the variety of perspectives serves to stop the powers of human reasoning. In 1984 the only politically correct thought was not thinking at all:

"The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness."[11]

In 1984 the people gained freedom by giving up their capacity to reason. O'Brien (Winston Smith's torturer) illustrates this with his comment on liberty:

"What opinions the masses hold, or do not hold, is looked on as a matter of indifference. They can be granted intellectual liberty because they have no intellect."[12]

In George Orwell's 1984, enormous efforts went into the almost unimaginably difficult task of physically rewriting a language, its literature, and its history. Orwell gives a clear picture of the immense job of physically changing everything relevant to thought:

"Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been re-painted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right."[13]

Through fire and ink, the people of Oceania's entire history and their potential for knowledge and reasoning were burned and rewritten. This stands in sharp contrast with the United States, where a model of public discourse evolved over many decades that is capable of destroying the people's ability to think about social and political issues without the need to write new dictionaries, rewrite literature, or burn books. The U.S. style of attacking the people's capacity to think is extraordinarily more efficient than Orwell's linguistically impossible, print controlling Newspeak. Instead of changing the whole language and controlling the entire printed record of a nation, the U.S. model of Orwellian talk has taken control of the people's speaking and reasoning habits. Imagine that you can get the people to voluntarily reduce their vocabulary, willingly give up a larger range of perspectives, and freely abandon their reliance on knowledge in political talk. In that case, you can destroy their reasoning powers without ever editing a single dictionary and without ever burning a single book.

## **The Structure and Implementation of The U.S. Brand of Orwellian Talk**

The structure of the dominant model of political talk in the U.S. makes for an extraordinary lesson in how to weaponize the freedom of speech. When you can seduce a people to express their freedom of speech without the exercise of reason, the slogan[14] from Orwell's *1984*, which is "Freedom is Slavery", takes on a new reality that is clear as the light of day in the United States. For what good is the freedom of speech in the absence of all reason? Without exercising our capacity to reason our speech becomes no better than the screeching of animals and the genuine human freedom that we find in the rational expression of our speech dies. The Orwellian model of political speech has enslaved most of the United States population to their lowest impulses. We are enslaved because we have learned to freely speak without taking responsibility for giving due diligence to thoughtful reasoning when we speak. Leading us to express our freedom of speech without making sure that our speech has the qualities and powers that come with knowledge and reason is the highest goal of the Orwellian model of U.S. political talk.

The destruction of reason in free speech is how our freedom of speech has been transformed into a weapon of tyranny. Remember O'Brien's evaluation of the people's liberty in Orwell's *1984*,

"What opinions the masses hold, or do not hold, is looked on as a matter of indifference. They can be granted intellectual liberty because they have no intellect."

Disabling the American people's intellect on political and social issues makes stealing the nation as easy as taking candy from babies. In the U.S. model of public talk on politics, the *1984* slogan "Freedom is Slavery" is the natural result of removing our capacity to reason from our freedom to speak on social and political issues.[15] Instead of the name "Newspeak", the U.S. version of Orwellian political talk might be better thought of as "Freespeak".

There are two categories of methods that serve the Orwellian purpose of destroying the exercise of reason in U.S. political talk. The first category is all about avoiding knowledge. The second category of methods works to reduce the complexity of talk by reducing vocabulary and perspectives. Both categories cooperate together and overlap. Avoiding knowledge automatically works to reduce the full range of vocabulary and perspectives. Working to reduce people's vocabulary and range of perspectives automatically serves to avoid knowledge.

Avoiding knowledge and reducing our vocabulary and the range of our perspectives in political talk are extraordinarily efficient methods to attack and destroy the people's ability to exercise their capacity to reason. In contrast to Orwell's *1984* there is no need to create a new dictionary, rewrite the literature of a society, or burn the books that the state rejects in order to avoid knowledge and reduce vocabulary and perspectives. If you can convince most of the population to give up all knowledge-based talk, freely

reduce their vocabulary, and limit their perspectives, the same destructive effect on language and thought as was envisioned in Orwell's *1984* is achieved. The result is that our freedom of speech, without knowledge and reason, puts us in bondage to the tyranny of thieves.

When we speak in the U.S. style of Orwellian political talk, we are free to choose to speak about any political topic that we desire using any vocabulary, knowledge, and reasoning we desire. However, we will not. Instead, we will only speak about the subjects that have been chosen for us. We will speak only in the manner of thinking that has been corporately approved and presented to us. We will speak only through the vocabulary and ideas that the wealthy powers have allowed to be repeated often in public media. Through the U.S. style of Orwellian political talk, our great and powerful freedom of speech, which we value so much in the United States, is transformed into a stupor of irrational cooperation with the tyranny of thieves. This transformation occurs when we are trained to express our freedom of speech as we voluntarily give up everything that makes the freedom of speech worthwhile. The knowledge and vocabulary that are scrupulously and selectively avoided in the Orwellian model of U.S. political talk are the knowledge and vocabulary required to speak about the governance of the nation. Any detailed, knowledge-based focus on the goals, issues, problems, structures, ideas, principles, and tactics for governing the most powerful nation in the history of humanity is rigorously avoided in virtually all corporately mediated U.S. political talk. In order to facilitate theft on the grandest scale, all knowledge-based talk about the public good must be strictly avoided as much as possible. In U.S. political talk, the basic goals of Orwell's *Newspeak* are achieved as citizens use their freedom of speech to freely subordinate themselves to wealthy thieves.

It is important to note that we are not claiming that the Orwellian structures of U.S. political talk, as described below, were invented out of thin air by the corporations, wealthy special interests, or U.S. political parties. They arose as an organic blend of the people's natural inclinations combined with the willful manipulations of those who seek to take advantage of the people's inclinations. For example, turning the news channels away from real journalism towards being a salacious soap opera that reports as few facts as possible requires cooperation. The corporations cannot fill in their 24/7 air time regurgitating irrelevant gossip, innuendo, rumors, partisan bigotry, and massive amounts of non-journalistic opinionated fluff without a market demand that would support this destructive change. You cannot run a business that stops the people from consuming rational, knowledge-based reporting of social and political issues unless they are inclined to willingly consume the offered alternative.



## A Preamble to Orwellian Methods

Below we will describe ten methods used in the popular style of U.S. political talk to avoid knowledge, reduce vocabulary, and reduce perspectives in order to destroy the people's ability to reason about social and political issues. Both in Newspeak and in U.S. political talk, the nuances of meaning and the power of creativity that would naturally accompany a depth of knowledge, a rich vocabulary, and a broad range of perspectives are eliminated. The Orwellian methods of the wealthy powers have almost completely destroyed the people's capacity to reason about political issues. These methods are all structurally interdependent and mutually reinforcing. *The functioning of one method relies upon and also reinforces the functioning of another method.* The reason killing methods of the corporate media and the political parties also reinforce and are reinforced by the people's natural habits and inclinations. With regard to the mutual dependency of the categories of methods described above, we cannot avoid knowledge without reducing our vocabulary and the range of our perspectives. We cannot reduce our vocabulary and the range of our perspectives without a resulting avoidance of knowledge.

The specific methods are mutually dependent and reinforce one another. "Avoiding knowledge Through Irrelevant Gossip" and "Avoiding Knowledge Through Partisan Bigotry" work hand in hand with the method of "Avoiding Knowledge Through Changing The Topic". Avoiding knowledge through the cultivation of partisan bigotry also effectively supports the method of "Reducing Perspectives Through Simplistic Dichotomies". In U.S. political talk, the full range of perspectives on issues is always discarded in favor of the simplistic dichotomies that partisan bigotry reinforces. The use of the method of "Reducing Vocabulary Through One Word Translations and Arguments" amplifies the Orwellian power of "Reducing Perspectives Through Simplistic Dichotomies". The method of "Destroying American Reasoning Through Time and Space Constraints" is mutually reinforced with the methods of "Reducing Vocabulary Through One Word Translations and Arguments", "Reducing Vocabulary Through Slogans, Memes, and Talking Points", and "Reducing Knowledge Through Selective Focus". "Avoiding Knowledge by Replacing Facts with Opinions" reinforces and is amplified by the methods of "Reducing Perspectives Through Media Echo Chambers", "Avoiding Knowledge Through Irrelevant Gossip", "Avoiding Knowledge Through Partisan Bigotry", "Reducing Vocabulary Through One Word Translations and Arguments", and "Reducing Vocabulary Through Slogans, Memes, and Talking Points". Other patterns of mutual dependency and reinforcement accompany the simultaneous use of all ten methods described below. Suffice it to say that the methods listed below reinforce and amplify one another. The organic whole of these methods is a more potent dystopian nightmare than any of them could ever be individually.

In Orwell's *1984*, if the authoritarian government told you that  $2+2=5$ , you would have to believe it against your own knowledge and common sense. The fundamental essence of the Orwellian in U.S. political talk is that the methods below work through the expression of our own freedom of speech. Through the expression of our own freedom,

we have learned to deny our own knowledge and common sense to say and do that, which we all know is wrong. The result of the mutually reinforcing methods of popular U.S. political talk is that we have created a reason annihilating, perfect Orwellian storm that has transformed our freedom of speech into slavery.

### **THE METHODS OF THE ORWELLIAN STYLE OF U.S. POLITICAL TALK**

"Ur-Fascism speaks Newspeak. Newspeak was invented by Orwell, in 1984, as the official language of Ingsoc, English Socialism. But elements of Ur-Fascism are common to different forms of dictatorship. All the Nazi or Fascist schoolbooks made use of an impoverished vocabulary, and an elementary syntax, in order to limit the instruments for complex and critical reasoning. But we must be ready to identify other kinds of Newspeak, even if they take the apparently innocent form of a popular talk show."

- Umberto Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, 1995.

### **Avoiding Knowledge Through Irrelevant Gossip**

Nobody wants to hear sleazy personal gossip when talking about the real knowledge of the issues is required in our daily lives. Yet, in politics, it has become the norm. In the United States, it is almost impossible to bring up a mainstream media source to see an in-depth, knowledgeable discussion of a real political topic, such as an hour-long talk focusing exclusively on the long term implications of implementing a policy position. Instead of finding an abundance of thoughtful, detailed, in-depth talk on real political subjects about governing the nation, we are virtually guaranteed to easily find an endless stream of vulgar gossip. We immerse ourselves in questions about which political actor did what with their genitals, who is the biggest liar or the worst cheater, who has impure motives or selfish ambitions, who is the most disrespectful, the most hateful, the most unpatriotic, has the tiniest hands, or an orange face. All such talk is a ridiculous substitute for real political discussions. It may seem strange to some readers to think that much of the political talk we are most accustomed to hearing in the United States is not political talk at all. However, this is an easy truth to understand.

Nobody talks about the human character of physicists regarding questions such as, "Are they perverts?", "Do they lie?", "Are they trustworthy?", and then proceed to delude themselves into thinking they are talking about the science of physics. Nobody talks about the personal ethics of a carpenter and then suffers from the delusion that they just talked about how to make things out of wood. The subject of human character is not the subject of physics or carpentry. This is true of the subjects of every art, trade, and science we use in daily life. Nobody ever confuses a talk on human character with the talk on any other subject because everybody knows this is very wrong. Human character is always and obviously a separate topic except in a field such as psychology where human character can be a topic of study.

To talk about physics, we all know that we must rely on physics knowledge, not the knowledge of which physicist is personally the most corrupt human being. To talk about carpentry we know that we must rely on the knowledge of how to make things out of wood, not on the knowledge of which carpenter is the biggest hater. To talk about United States' politics, we must rely on the knowledge related to the nation's governance. Talking about the failure of our nation's political actors' human character is not a political discussion. As if by a common sense that we all share, we easily reject the idea that human character can replace the talk about any topic in ordinary life. Yet, we have been convinced to allow it as a substitute for the topic of politics. As in Orwell's *1984*, where being forced by authoritarian dictatorship to embrace logical contradictions is a way of life (blackwhite, doublethink), we also embrace an Orwellian bondage as we defy our own knowledge and common sense when it comes to political talk. However, unlike Orwell's *1984*, we have done so out of our own freedom to speak as we please.

Ad hominem argument, when a person is attacked instead of the idea, is a recognized logical fallacy. It is common knowledge that discrediting an idea based on discrediting a person is wrong. If a mathematician says that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , it does not matter if he plays with his genitals in a way that you dislike. It also does not matter if your favorite political leader tells us that  $2 + 2 = 5$ . It is the knowledge of mathematics that should determine any judgments about his mathematical statements, not the knowledge of his sexual habits or our political affiliation. Political talk in the United States must, like any other problem we handle in daily life, focus the structure of issues and the exchange of ideas, not on our gossip about the defects of the character of politicians and other individuals and groups.

Some might think, "Hey, human character is a political topic because the character of people affects how the nation is governed." This is a true statement. Character does affect performance. We also want to trust the character of people who know more than we know. If a political leader speaks of things much more complex than  $2+2=4$ , our ability to independently handle their talk decreases. What if a politician had to speak about:

$$\nabla^2\phi(x, y, z) = -\rho(x, y, z) / \epsilon_0$$

Suddenly, a lot of people no longer can decide for themselves about the quality of the talk. There must be trust in people who manage things on our behalf for which we do not possess sufficient knowledge to do it ourselves. We trust the electrician to install electric wiring because we do not know how to do it ourselves. We trust a computer expert to fix our computer us because we do not know how to do it ourselves. Many political problems are much more complex and ambiguous than complex mathematics and these complex political problems place a great demand on citizens' trust. We naturally want our politicians to have good character.

Although it is true that character affects performance and it is true that we must find good character in those who require our trust, this is true of all human performance in all

of the arts, trades, and sciences. Nobody wants their auto mechanic to be a serial killer who is rigging their car to kill them. We want our auto mechanic to have good character. We must trust the character of the doctor who possesses knowledge that we do not. Nobody wants the surgeon, who will operate on their brain, to be a lazy alcoholic who cheated in medical school. We want our surgeon to have good character. Yet, nobody ever confuses the talk about the character of an auto mechanic with talk about how to fix a car. Nobody confuses the talk about the character of a surgeon with talk about the issues involved in brain surgery. Human character is important to human performance in every art, trade, and science. In spite of this importance, we never make the mistake in daily life of confusing the talk about human character with the talk about other subjects.

The great and very dark exception to our common sense rejection of confusing character with other subjects is in our talk about politics. The dominance of the ad hominem framing of almost all U.S. political talk, which focuses on the character of people instead of ideas, is clearly an obvious violation of our common sense. This violation of our own common sense is also a violation of our capacity to reason and therefore represents a loss of political power and freedom. The capacity to willingly engage in the contradiction of our own knowledge and reason is a theme in Orwell's *1984*. There are two terms in Orwell's Newspeak that relate to the contradiction of common sense. One of the terms, blackwhite, refers to

"a loyal willingness to say that black is white when Party discipline demands this. But it means also the ability to believe that black is white, and more, to know that black is white, and to forget that one has ever believed the contrary." [16]

The second term is the Newspeak term doublethink,

"Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them. The Party intellectual knows in which direction his memories must be altered; he therefore knows that he is playing tricks with reality; but by the exercise of doublethink he also satisfies himself that reality is not violated. The process has to be conscious, or it would not be carried out with sufficient precision, but it also has to be unconscious, or it would bring with it a feeling of falsity and hence of guilt. Doublethink lies at the very heart of Ingsoc [17], since the essential act of the Party is to use conscious deception while retaining the firmness of purpose that goes with complete honesty. To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies—all this is indispensably necessary." [18]

Doublethink is a willful oblivion to the implications of contradiction that is different from the healthy habit of tolerating contradictions and ambiguities in a way that supports our full reasoning powers. Doublethink is not the ability to hold contradictory ideas in the mind so that we have the power to carefully consider an issue from all angles.

Doublethink is a willful numbing of the mind where remembering or forgetting whatever is convenient to the moment simply makes the contradictions invisible to us.

Doublethink is the ability to remain on point with the party message no matter what contradictions or false information is present. There is no thought in doublethink except the ability to mindlessly repeat and support the party line. When our common sense would demand we consider the implications of a contradiction, doublethink erases that impulse to make all contradictions null and void. To hear some of our politicians, political advocates, and citizens speak, one could be forgiven for believing that doublethink must have become an official political philosophy in the United States. When we deny our common knowledge, common sense, and common reason, we manifest the worst of the Orwellian nightmare we are creating for ourselves.

Our common sense forces us to reject the idea of allowing the talk of human character to replace the necessary talk about our knowledge of any practical topic that is useful for daily living. When we are solving our own daily problems we know the truth. Yet, we contradict our own common sense with a measurable lack of self honesty when we allow our political talk to obsess on people to the neglect of discussing politics with a proper focus on knowledge and ideas. When the people's reliance on knowledge collapses, when their will to give due diligence to the exercise of reason is abandoned, when honesty even to oneself dies, then the darkest flavors of the dystopian nightmare from *1984* are a living reality in the lives of the citizens of the United States. Some may argue that the torture of human beings is the worst part of the tyranny of Orwell's *1984*. Here it should be noted that even severe physical torture may be faced with an excellence of integrity that manifests the best and most noble aspects of human character. However, when the integrity of our capacity to reason dies, most of what is best and noble within us dies with it. The darkest theme of Orwell's dystopia, which is all about killing the people's capacity to reason, is on a very public, very visible murderous rampage in the democratic republic of the United States. The U.S. model of public talk on politics is truly Orwellian in its devotion to allowing the knowledge, reason, and honesty of its citizens to die.

### **Avoiding Knowledge Through Bigotry**

Webster's dictionary defines bigotry as an "obstinate or intolerant devotion to one's own opinions and prejudices". This definition of bigotry also clearly defines the communication habits between Republicans and Democrats. Blindly holding onto one's own opinions and prejudices in their refusal to even listen to one another characterizes most communication between partisan political interests. It is the nature of the most common communication style between conservatives and liberals to abandon the great American tradition of the free exchange of ideas, refuse to hear one another, and blindly plow forward, grasping only what one wants to believe. Holding on to one's own opinions without regard to giving due diligence to listening to and reasoning about the ideas and information that others bring to the conversational table is a manifestation of pure bigotry and serves the avoidance of knowledge. Inherent to the nature of the blind partisan bigotry that dominates politics in the United States is the breakdown of productive communication and the avoidance of any talk that has the potential to create

new knowledge or understanding. Promoting bigotry in public political conversations is an important method in the Orwellian model of U.S. political talk. The political parties and corporate media use partisan bigotry to avoid knowledge and to destroy the people's capacity to reason. The exercise of reason in public conversations about political and social issues must be avoided at all costs so that the increasing corruption of the three branches of the U.S. government may continue to grow with a minimum of public interference.

The easiest path to dispel reason from political discourse is to inject a dose of emotion. In Oceania (the country governed by Big Brother) it was very important to keep the people emotional. A method in 1984 for getting the people into a highly emotional state is called "Two Minutes Hate". Every citizen of Oceania is obliged to join group sessions which whipped the people up into a frenzy of hatred for their country's enemies. Winston Smith said of the Two Minutes Hate sessions, "The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining in.". Later, O'Brien, the inner party member who tortured Smith, tells Smith that Oceania was "founded upon hatred.".[19]

In the U.S., the wealthy powers who want to steal the nation are not interested in unifying all of the people. The wealthy powers want enough emotionally intense partisan, sexual, religious, racial, gender, ethnic, and other divisions burning in the hearts and minds of the people to distract them from ever paying attention to the essential class divisions that define the presence of a thief in the house. There is still a desire in some to cultivate hatred towards outsiders as was done in 1984, but by far the main focus is on inducing the blind, irrational hatred of one American citizen towards another. The most active, virulent, and politically subversive bigotry functioning in the U.S. is the hatred between Republicans and Democrats. This partisan bigotry also simplistically tags people with the labels conservative-right and liberal-left respectively. An artificially exaggerated, intellectually degenerate, and emotionally melodramatic war between these two partisan demographics has been staged in the media for decades, which has worked very effectively to bring about the decline of political reasoning in the United States. The primary outcome of allowing and promoting partisan bigotry in public political talk is to avoid knowledge through shutting down all productive conversation as irrational partisan hatred abounds. Hating one another and fighting against one another stops the people from thinking about the issues the corporate media wants to avoid. This has been going on for a long time, as Chomsky noted in 1994:

"There are growing domestic social and economic problems, in fact, maybe catastrophes. Nobody in power has any intention of doing anything about them. If you look at the domestic programs of the administrations of the past ten years-I include here the Democratic opposition-there's really no serious proposal about what to do about the severe problems of health, education, homelessness, joblessness, crime, soaring criminal populations, jails, deterioration in the inner cities - the whole raft of problems... In such circumstances you've got to divert the bewildered herd, because if they start noticing this they may not like it, since they're the ones suffering from it. Just having

them watch the Superbowl and the sitcoms may not be enough. You have to whip them up into fear of enemies."[20]

Millions of Americans, who think that partisan division is the actual functional focus for talking about U.S. politics, do not realize that the nature of the talk about partisan division is nothing more than a complete distraction from real political issues. Instead of being actively involved in thinking about the structures, ideas, principles, and plans related to solving the problems of the nation, almost all publicly presented political talk in corporately owned media reduces us merely to listening to Democrats and Republicans whine about each other. The constant, infantile squabbling between conservatives and liberals has become the whole of U.S. politics. We are exposed to an endless dirty stream of partisan politicians, political operatives, and bigoted advocates accusing each other of the corruption of character and of having evil motivations. We are forced to constantly listen to them expressing their overly emotional loathing of one another with their absurdly limited vocabulary. When bigoted talk reaches its peak, emotional ranting against people replaces the rational analysis of ideas, values, goals, principles, and issues. **The horrible thing about constantly witnessing Republican-Democrat, conservative-liberal hate in the media is that for millions of Americans, as Winston Smith said in 1984, it is impossible for them to avoid joining in.**

Instead of exchanging ideas to improve our understanding of the most important issues facing our nation, the dominant habit in the U.S. of talking to people who think differently is to stop talking about the actual issues. The Orwellian model of U.S. political talk routinely seeks to change the topic by simply calling people names or labeling them, questioning their motivations, moving to the conversation to examining their human character, or questioning their group affiliations on the basis of simplistic preconceptions. Changing the topic, which will be detailed in a later section, is a technique that is regularly used to avoid the knowledge of issues. The hallmark of popular U.S. political talk is to just stop listening to anyone who does not think the same as you. This posture of disengagement for political talk in the U.S makes having a productive political conversation impossible. This is the goal of the Orwellian model. To make people willfully blind and deaf to their own neighbors as we abandon our adult responsibility to reason together is the Orwellian version of patriotism in U.S. political talk. The wealthy powers work through the parties and the media to manipulate the people's freedom of speech in order to help the people avoid knowledge and disable the peoples' honesty about facts. This thieving subversion is most commonly expressed in the promotion of partisan bigotry, which gives birth to a nightmare of irrational political talk. Partisan bigotry giving birth to irrationality is one manifestation of the wealthy powers' Orwellian vision of the perfection of U.S. political talk. When partisan bigotry affects political speech, our capacity to reason is replaced with the emotional and unreasoning regurgitation of memorized information. Simplistic party talking points, stereotypes, slogans, and memes become the whole of talk when we reject real political talk in favor of bigoted partisan bickering.

The model and training for the practice of disrespect and hatred of our fellow citizens has been in place in the media and the political parties for decades. Nobody is born with

an instinct to loath Republicans, Democrats, or anyone else. We learn it. The primary training ground is watching the leaders of our nation and other talking heads in the media either model or accept this behavior. When disrespect and hatred are practiced enough to be automated and thus function independently from the exercise of our capacity to reason, we produce the full measure of bigotry. It is easier to hold onto our own ideas when we have an irrational personal excuse to not listen to another human being.

The exercise of our capacity to reason requires a persistent focus on the acquisition of new knowledge, but **the heart and soul of all bigotry is the avoidance of new knowledge**. The difference between merely repeating what we think we already know and learning new things is the key to understanding bigotry. In the bigoted aspect of Orwellian U.S. political talk, we are programmed to prefer to avoid new knowledge if it is easier to use that which we already know. Using the knowledge we have memorized to get through life faster and more efficiently is a vital survival strategy that appeals to our natural sense. If we always had to interpret everything as if it were new, humanity would have long ceased to exist. However, this human instinct for repeating our knowledge has severe limits.

For example, when I was a child, I acquired the knowledge I needed to tie my shoelaces. I learned the method and practiced it until I mastered it. Ever since then, I have been blindly repeating the tying of my shoelaces like a machine. I do not express my capacity to reason about shoelace tying. I am not open to asking new questions about shoelace tying. I know it and do it automatically. And it works fine. However, there is a serious limit to this kind of automation, which I first learned about from my reading of Plato, whose dialogues are part of the rational foundation of western civilization. The great message of Plato is a warning through the character of Socrates, who tells us that we must not merely repeat what we have memorized in our youth when it comes to our understanding of the justice and virtue of human character or the beauty and goodness of life. On more complex subjects and tasks, including the very demanding task of interpreting other human beings and the political task of governing a nation, we must remain open to basic questions and always be willing to question ourselves and learn new things. Justice is not as simple as tying our shoelaces. And nobody is capable of reasoning about the justice of a society if they refuse to question their own understanding.

With regard to our understanding of people, Plato's warning also tells us that we cannot afford to interpret others as if a single person can be understood through group identity labels and group identified stereotypes. Doing nothing more than memorizing group identity labels and characteristics such as those relative to being a Democrat or Republican, black or white, Christian or atheist, and so on, will always fail to help us to understand a unique person. Failing to interpret another human being as an individual person, which is a reliable effect of bigotry, reduces our ability to rationally relate to and talk with that person. Interpreting people individually takes significantly more attentive work than assigning labels and ideas to whole groups, but this is the reality of the task at hand if we want to communicate productively with one another.



Millions of U.S. citizens often reject the more difficult task of actually interpreting a person. They replace the need to interpret a person with the bigot posture of using their memorized knowledge of that person's group identity to convince themselves that they already know everything they need to know about a person. This is how bigotry helps us avoid new knowledge. Instead of learning about a person, we hold onto our preexisting knowledge of that person's group affiliations or some stereotyped characteristic of their ideas, motivations, or being. Bigotry helps us avoid gaining any knowledge of that person's ideas because we have an excuse to stop listening and interpreting. The avoidance of knowledge inherent to bigotry serves the goal of the wealthy powers to shut down effective reasoning in public talk.

The ease and popularity of allowing partisan bigotry to have its way in U.S. political talk is not just a manipulation of corporate powers. It is also a human inclination. Think of it this way. If I believe I already know everything I need to know about you (the classic bigot posture), then it will be natural for me to stop interpreting you. Why would I extend the effort to interpret you if I think that I already know everything I need to know about you? I will naturally and automatically avoid learning anything new about you because I will trust my memorized knowledge instead. If I think that I have already learned of your "kind" and believe that I already know everything I need to know about your perspective, then the real person standing before me with real ideas becomes completely invisible and irrelevant. It is natural that I will project my memorized knowledge onto you, and in that act of projection, avoid any new knowledge about you. The mechanism of action of all bigotry is the rejection of new knowledge.

**The essence of bigotry's effect on our social relationships is that we cease to open our hearts and minds to one another in an act of fresh interpretation.** The most consistent structure underlying all bigotry is the closure of the mind to the possibility of learning something new from another human being. The soul of all bigotry is the avoidance of new knowledge. Promoting our instinctual inclinations to bigotry helps corporations, the media, and political parties, train us like pavlovian dogs to be vigilant at avoiding new knowledge in any political conversation that is affected by our bigotry. When the exercise of bigotry replaces the exercise of reason, the avoidance of knowledge inherent to the nature of bigotry teaches us to stop interpreting another person's ideas, reasons, experiences, principles, and understandings of life. This is a disaster to the extent that genuinely rational conversations, which are always vitally open to new knowledge, are absolutely necessary to the well being of politics in a democratic republic. **Much of the Orwellian lobotomy of politics in the United States dwells in our capacity to play the bigot to one another.**

The deliberately staged displays of public partisan bigotry between Republicans and Democrats by the nation's leaders and talking heads in the media are the greatest theater trick in U.S. politics. The melodramatic theatrics of partisan bigotry are being deliberately emphasized in order to increase voter loyalty while simultaneously decreasing the rational content of political conversations. The partisan polarization of political talk serves to increase the predictability of voter performance. By deliberately cultivating the bigotry of partisan divisions, the corporately owned media and political

parties effectively reduce the range of perspectives on issues to the simplistic dichotomies that bigotry reinforces. Our public political conversations' intelligence and productivity are severely damaged through the public modeling and promotion of the knowledge avoiding behavior of partisan bigotry that we see in the media.

A blunt truth about our common sense is that we do not accept the dysfunctional behavior of bigoted talk in real life problem solving. If we have to solve a real problem, we all know that the knowledge relevant to the problem is the necessary focus, not bigoted talk against a person. The Orwellian characteristic of guiding a population into the denial of their own knowledge and common sense is fully present when the people play "follow the leader" and allow partisan bigotry to have any place in our political talk about the nation's problems. We all know how to hold ourselves accountable to knowledge in daily life. Nobody talks about solutions to their daily practical problems without reasoning about their knowledge. Nobody ever solves a practical problem without relying on the knowledge necessary to get it done. If we fail to fix a problem the first time, we all know that the original knowledge or skill we brought into the task was inadequate. In the face of failure, we follow our common sense to seek out and embrace new knowledge in order to solve ordinary problems in daily life. In terms of applying knowledge to problems, we have higher standards for our conversations about fixing a car or replacing a light bulb than we have for governing the most powerful nation in history.

If you were in front of a team of doctors who refused to discuss their knowledge of medicine, the details of their diagnosis of your condition, and their treatment plan, but instead spent all their conversational energy accusing each other of being corrupt (in other words they talked like politicians). You would run for your life. And you would be right to run. Doctors, electricians, and the practitioners of all the trades and sciences do not resolve their differences on how to solve a work problem by ranting like bigots at each other. We all know they must rely on the knowledge of their respective trade or science to get the job done. It is obvious to all of us that bigoted talk, emotional hate talk, and personal gossip are irrelevant to discussing any practical problem that requires knowledge to play a role in the solution. The entire model of U.S. political discourse, insofar as it is dominated by partisan bigotry, can be summarized as a contradiction of our own common sense as we willfully throw out any idea of having knowledge-based conversations with one another in exchange for just pissing in each other's faces like enemies. The betrayal of our own common sense and our own knowledge is the defining characteristic of all that is Orwellian in U.S. political talk.

The natural standards for relying on knowledge and reason to solve problems in daily life is a part of our shared objective reality, yet we deny the existence of this objective reality for political discussions as we allow bigotry to rule in an act of avoiding knowledge and reason in political talk. This denial of objective reality for politics is a kind of Orwellian doublethink. Winston Smith mused about how the functioning of doublethink made a person able to "deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies"[21]. This degenerate form of the freedom of speech in the United States, which destroys the people's capacity to reason

about politics, is a dystopian nightmare. To the extent that partisan bigotry is a dominant feature of the Orwellian U.S. model of political talk, we might be tempted to say, as O'Brien said about the foundation of his country, that it is "founded upon hate". However, when hate or any other emotion devoid of knowledge replaces our capacity to reason about the public good, it is more accurate to say that our country is being destroyed by hate. One thing is certain. Hate and bigotry are no substitute for knowledge and reason. They do not belong in useful political conversations. We all know this. We all know that the bigotry of partisan politics is wrong.

### **Avoiding Knowledge Through Changing the Topic**

The most common way to avoid the knowledge of any subject is to quickly change the topic. It is cheap and easy and it is rampant in our political talk. Changing the topic is often done in connection to other methods such as the ad hominem framing of gossip and the partisan bigotry discussed above. When you shift the talk to a focus on the defects and virtues of human character, the actual issues of the governance of the nation are ignored and any knowledge required for a real political conversation are effectively avoided. A major technique that works with gossip and bigotry is "Whataboutism". In "whataboutism" the topic is changed and the person avoids the possibility of rational talk that naturally comes when we remain properly focused on a single topic by saying, "What about such and such". This has the effect of shutting the original conversation down. Whataboutism works well with the ad hominem focus because it is easy to trade observations about personal defects or to trade personal insults. If the focus is on the defects of one party, the avoiding response is "What about your party?". If the talk is focused on an single person, such as a political candidate, then the avoiding response is, "What about your candidate?". With whataboutism, nobody maintains a focus on one subject long enough for the conversation to have rational integrity. Even the knowledge required to talk about people's character in a rational way, which is not a proper focus for most political conversations, is scrupulously avoided when we are just throwing quick flashes of talk back and forth in constantly changing series of topics.

Ad hominem personal attack talk and bigotry are commonly seen in conversations as they are introduced into the conversation through whataboutism. If the topic is on a structure of the economy, suddenly we are talking about the personal defects of a single person or a group that is not related to the knowledge of that economic structure. If we are talking about a policy position that has an effect on foreign policy, suddenly we are expressing stereotypes about people. This kind of topic change ensures that real, knowledge based talk about political and social issues will be avoided as much as possible. Politicians are in the well-practiced habit of avoiding getting into any depth of conversation over the details of their positions. Politicians would rather attack people, misdirect people away from issues they do not want to discuss, or simply run away from the camera (literally). Engaging in evasion is the habit of choice that politicians prefer over talking honestly and in-depth about the issues and their supported policy positions.

That we allow politicians to engage in this atrocious and obviously incorrect behavior is a violation of our own common sense. Nobody does business with a person who refuses to talk about the details of your business with them. We do not trust doctors who run away from the opportunity to detail their diagnosis and treatments. We do not look up to friends or family members with respect who avoid talking about necessary issues. Yet, we keep electing politicians over and over, who evade talking about issues as if the whole of our own common sense dies a quick death at the first mention of politics. This Orwellian tolerance of obviously wrong behavior by politicians, which defies our common sense, helps the wealthy powers steal a nation by securing the careers of public servants who are too busy being sycophants to their wealthy donors to represent the people.

### **Avoiding Knowledge Through Replacing Facts with Opinions**

If I can make you lose your ability to discern the difference in the value of opinions versus the value of facts, then I have robbed you of something essential. The wholesale marketing of unsubstantiated opinions has succeeded to the point that mere opinions have become the primary product of corporate news media. The corporate philosophy of doing as little as possible in order to take as much as possible has affected the quantity and quality of information given to us by corporately owned mainstream news networks, which run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The news channels and other corporate media have perfected the art of giving the least amount of information possible to make their money. One can learn more facts about the world in one hour on the internet, than can be learned watching all three major news networks 24 hours a day for several days. This is particularly obvious when a major story breaks and all the news networks talk about one story 24 hours a day for days. When the news networks minimize the amount of facts they present, there is a lot of air time to fill. The primary content filler substitute for factual reporting is the presentation of opinions, which fills the vast majority of news network air time. The need to avoid knowledge through the sabotage of the news is fulfilled with dramatic effectiveness by this practice. Simply giving the people as few facts as possible keeps them uninformed automatically.

The concept of "fake news" in the mainstream media is not about true and false. This incorrect but extremely popular conception of "fake news" is a complete distortion of the reality of the game being played by corporate news networks. The fact is that a major news network can still be embarrassed if it is proven they got the facts wrong. The major networks will even fire people who screwed up the facts. Fake News in the mainstream media is really about the difference between actual journalism that is focusing on the facts verses the non-journalistic presentation of opinions about facts. Why do major newspapers have an editorial section where opinion pieces are presented? This section exists because it is a journalistic standard to keep opinions separate from the news. What the corporate news networks have done is to collapse the two together, such that we have three major opinion networks that report as little real information as possible (MSNBC, FOX, CNN). Opinions are not news unless they

are the factually reported opinions of a newsworthy person. Newsworthy facts are not the opinions of talking heads. Real journalism deals with reporting news stories on a factual basis. Presenting endless opinions in the guise of news reporting is why most mainstream news reporting can be called fake news. If the dominance of opinion was just as severe in a major newspaper, it would be as if their editorial section of that newspaper expanded to the whole paper without any mention of the difference between editorials and the news.

It is a major task at MSNBC, Fox, and CNN to figure out how to fill up air time 24 hours a day while still giving the impression they are an actual news network. Fortunately for them, the public has accepted second-hand opinions as the norm for so-called news. The normal experience of watching the 24-hour network news channels is to get a few facts in an hour of programming and then spend the rest of the hour listening to opinions. Today, an ocean of mere opinions is what passes itself off as news. An editorial hour of opinions is not an hour of news reporting. Opinions passed off as news is fake news. Today, millions of people are confused about the difference between the value of opinions about facts and the facts themselves. This is a major problem in the U.S. and a good example of the success of the Orwellian model of political talk's ability to destroy the people's reliance on knowledge. Think of the hideous irony. Today, we have multiple 24 hours a day, 7 days a week news channels. However, we now get less actual facts and perspectives than ever before. Now that is an Orwellian touch with deadly consequences.

This phenomenon goes beyond the behavior of the news networks. Millions of U.S. citizens strongly believe that their personal opinions on the technical subjects that have been effectively politicized are just as valid as the consensus of the scientific community. It is odd that we still accept the value of expert knowledge when the topic has not been politicized. We trust expert knowledge with our money, our possessions, our homes, and our lives. The instant a topic gets politicized, such as masks or climate change, suddenly our trust of expert knowledge falls to the ground. This bizarre, irrational, and suspiciously politicized disavowal of knowledge is a sign that the agenda to destroy the people's reliance on knowledge when discussing political and social issues has been successfully advanced. **As far as the wealthy powers are concerned, persuasion without the need for knowledge is the holy grail of U.S. political talk.** Securing predictable voter performances without ever having one rational, knowledge-based conversation with the public is the Orwellian vision of perfection for U.S. political talk. The structure and functioning of the corporate media and the political parties' behavior, who regularly prioritize opinions over facts in the public eye, reveals that a lot of time and money has been spent on elevating opinions over facts and reason. Damaging the quality of our reliance upon knowledge in political talk has been the plain result.

## Avoiding Knowledge Through Selective Focus

When the corporate media and political parties simply refuse to report on or talk in-depth about the issues they wish to hide, we are deprived of knowledge about those issues. Corporate news and the political parties deliberately obscure the knowledge of key legislative issues. This obscurity is focused on issues that affect the bottom line of the wealthy powers. When a broader range of issues is hidden, the public does not get the opportunity to think about them. There are topics that the wealthy powers care very much about and topics about which they care very little. In the U.S., one could have a detailed conversation utilizing extraordinary in-depth knowledge of the topic of weather, and the wealthy powers will not bat an eye. However, in-depth knowledge-based talk on key economic policy positions is publicly avoided at all costs by the corporately controlled political parties and media. The more the wealthy powers can get people to talk about issues they do not care about, the less the public will focus upon and productively discuss the issues the wealthy powers do care about. This kind of distraction makes it easier to get away with massive theft through corrupting the political process to influence the legislation on their chosen issues.

On the three big networks, you will often see immensely detailed coverage of a hurricane but almost never see detailed reporting on the long term implications of implementing a legislative package beyond superficial slogan-like references discussed with a shallow level of detail. The news networks will gladly report every dramatic and gory detail of the riots over racial injustice for days, weeks, or months. However, you will be hard-pressed to find any detailed reporting on racial justice issues relative to the need for prison reform, problems with jury selection, issues with low levels of training of police, or legislative issues on the racial injustice of institutional racism. You will always see reporting on the facts of politicians' personal corruption but will never see any real investigative journalism on corporate corruption. Superficial reporting on corporate corruption occurs if a particular corporate bad actor gets caught publicly with their hand in the cookie jar. Only public exposure forces corporate media to report on specific examples of corporate corruption, but the corporate media never thoroughly investigates corporate corruption at a systemic level.

Avoiding knowledge through selective focus is also part of the operations of the political parties in public conversation. Conservatives are a little bit, but not much more prone to being manipulated in this fashion. (For our perspective on the collapse of traditional conservatism in the U.S. see our essay, *The Beauty of The Conservative Mind: Conservatism and The Examined Life*) Issues such as the war on Christmas, LGBT issues, abortion, and ad hominem rants against Democrats, are some of the selected topics that the GOP will eagerly discuss at length any day of the week. The more they talk about these issues, the less they have to be held accountable for their policy positions that directly affect the bottom line of wealthy powers who are their largest donors. If you try to pin down a GOP politician to discussing key economic policies in detail, they will shut down the conversation, change the topic, or literally run away. It is all about money. In order to maximize their profits, the wealthy powers must succeed at

keeping the people from focusing on, reasoning about, or talking about, the core policy issues that affect their bottom line. The GOP must also keep the people from focusing on core policy positions in order for their complicity with their wealthy donors to remain as stealthy as possible. When the wealthy powers and the political parties are successful at keeping the people from talking about key issues, the theft of a nation can proceed with maximum stealth.

Selective focus is an important tactic for the GOP, who works very hard to make sure conservatives are more interested in discussing family values than discussing the value of key policy positions that impact U.S. corporations' wealth. The wealthiest business interests prefer that we engage in heated discussions about the morality of individual living and to never, ever discuss the ethics of corporate behavior. The 1% prefers that we talk against one another as divided enemies than to knowledgeably discuss the problems of class division and systemic political corruption that define the theft of a nation.

Distraction issues for the Democratic Party (DNC) function to limit the range of progressive talk. DNC distractions work by the DNC playing the role of the opposition party through an ad hominem focus on the personal corruption of the GOP. Recently, the target has been almost exclusively Trump and those cooperating with the Trump administration. Instead of publicly expressing a systemic critical analysis of core policy failures that open up the full range of possibilities for progressive knowledge-based talk on the nation's issues, the DNC has obsessed over every detail of Trump's perversion and corruption. This obsession works perfectly to help give progressive talk less room to focus on knowledge-based issue analysis. There is a big difference between obsessing about an individual politician doing wrong and engaging in knowledge-based analysis of the nation's core issues. The former is merely an ad hominem distraction because Donald Trump is not the problem. Trump is the result you get from a corrupt political system that is already hostile to the people's reliance on knowledge, reasoning, and honesty in public speech. The latter, which is a reasoned analysis of the nation's issues and policy positions, is an important part of the real work of political talk that is suspiciously absent in the United States. In the last few years, talking about the personal corruption of Donald Trump has been the primary distraction issue for Democrats and other progressives.

Allowing people to habitually speak rationally in knowledge-based conversations on political and social issues is the worst-case scenario that the corporate media and the political parties want to scrupulously avoid as much as possible. It compromises the goal of stealing as much as possible if the people are allowed to expect intelligent and rational speech on political issues from the parties and the media. Better is to train them to avoid reasoning by tolerating irrelevant, personal, bigoted, and off-topic babbling as a replacement for intelligent, knowledge-based talk on political and social issues. Best is to get them to not discuss certain issues at all and replace those issues with distracting topics, which the corporations do not care about at all. When the parties and the media disproportionately talk about their favorite distraction issues, then the knowledge of crucial social and political issues is successfully avoided. Mission accomplished. If the

voters can be persuaded to commit to the wealthy powers' targeted voting outcomes without ever rationally discussing the issues they are concerned about, then the Orwellian model of U.S. political talk has achieved a perfect result.

### **Reducing Vocabulary Through One Word Translations and Arguments**

Imagine if one word could translate a whole paragraph or book. Such a one-word translation is the ultimate destruction of knowledge, meaning, and reasoning through the reduction of vocabulary. In the *Principles of Newspeak* appendix of the novel *1984*, we find the second paragraph of *The Declaration of Independence*:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of those ends, it is the right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government . . ."[22]

With regard to translating this paragraph into Newspeak, Orwell writes,

"It would have been quite impossible to render this into Newspeak while keeping to the sense of the original. The nearest one could come to doing so would be to swallow the whole passage up in the single word *crimethink*."[23]

The reduced vocabulary and the elimination of shades of meaning in Orwell's Newspeak made it impossible to translate the ideas in this paragraph from *The Declaration of Independence*. As all of the ideas in this paragraph were criminal in *Oceania* (the country governed by Big Brother), only one word was needed to communicate the only possible remaining meaning. The one word erases any knowledge of the original text merely to say that it is a crime (*crimethink*). This bizarre translation act eliminates knowledge as the details of a text are replaced by a single word, which represents a single evaluation. In this case, a negative value is passed onto the paragraph. The one-word translation is meaningless to the original paragraph. This technique of using one word to translate many is as blunt and dark as its purpose in *1984*.

"Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. **Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly one word**, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten."  
(Bold Emphasis Mine)[24]



This one-word style of translation seems to be impossible in real life. However, the blunt and dark irony is that the use of only one word to interpret and replace any speech or writing act, whether it be a paragraph, a short statement, a whole argument, or an entire world view, is a standard habit of conversational disengagement in U.S. political talk. Avoiding knowledge, disregarding meaning, and ending a conversation through the use of a single word to cast a simple yes or no evaluation on any speech act, is a powerful Orwellian habit of political talk in the U.S. that works to eliminate reasoning. What seemed impossibly impractical in the fiction of Orwell's *newspeak* is a living reality in the United States.

Regarding the idea that one word can replace a whole argument, there are six related words used in this way in our political talk in the United States. These six words are used to frame all political issues so that any speech or text can be accepted or dismissed with a single word. Tragically, these six words are meaningless to any properly focused political talk about the actual issues, ideas, and principles involved in governing the nation. Millions of citizens do to political arguments with one word what Orwell did to the second paragraph of *The Declaration of Independence*. The habit of many millions of American citizens is to accept or reject any political argument on the basis of just one of these six words. Whole arguments can be swallowed up by any one of these six powerful, reason annihilating words. When these six words are used, knowledge is avoided as the actual meanings of speech and texts are ignored. The more these six Orwellian words are used in our talk, the less we will reason about our knowledge in political conversations. The use of these six words closes hearts and minds, disengages our powers of reasoning, and stops all useful conversation on political issues. The six words that have almost completely killed reasoning in political discourse in the United States are Republican, Democrat, Left, Right, Conservative, and Liberal.

Like Orwell's Newspeak, where one word, *crimethink*, can replace a whole paragraph of the *Declaration of Independence*, the U.S. rendition of a dystopian language can take any one of these six words and replace any speech act no matter how many words it contains. This reduction in vocabulary is entirely based on partisan bigotry, which makes it possible to replace the dozens or hundreds of words in any act of writing or speech with only one word. As soon as one of the six words is used in a conversation, the exchange of ideas necessary to reason about politics stops dead in its tracks. Americans are well trained in their own version of "Two Minutes Hate". The instant most U.S. citizens are able to apply one of the six partisan words to the speech of another citizen; the ability to listen to the other person's point of view starts to die. This refusal to interpret another citizen is the standard knowledge avoiding posture of partisan bigotry, which can be initiated by any one of the six words.

The instant most conservatives hear the word "liberal", "Democrat", or "left", they stop interpreting the other person and simply regurgitate what they have memorized in association with those words. By applying one of the six words as an adjective, the whole speech or text is replaced by a yes or no evaluation based on one word. A five-thousand-word dissertation on any political topic instantly becomes void the moment a

partisan conservative hears it referred to as "liberal". No reading, context, explanation, or evidence is required to support this partisan value judgment. The same is true when a partisan liberal hears one of the words, "conservative", "Republican", or "Right", and stops interpreting a speech act or text in order to apply a stereotyping judgment based on a single word. As soon as any talk or writing on any subject becomes known as a "conservative", a large number of liberally inclined progressives in the U.S. are inclined to assume its intellectual integrity is poor without even reading it. Allowing one word to trigger a yes or no judgment about other people's ideas, perspectives, and speech in the absence of a fresh interpretation diminishes our capacity to exchange information and reason about ideas. The blunt and dark truth is that on precisely the issues we need to exchange ideas in open and free discussion, millions of us are triggered by single words to avoid new knowledge and to minimize our use of vocabulary. These six single words regularly function to shut a useful conversation down.

There are other words that have the dystopian power to kill reasoning in conversation. Imagine a talk from someone on the so-called "left", who articulates a well thought out five-point argument on some economic issue. All that needs to be done is for the opposing argument is to say one word, "socialism", and for millions of conservative citizens, the conversation is over. If so-called conservatives accuse any economic argument of being socialist, then that is the only word they need say. There need be no exchange of ideas, no evidence, no explanations, no sound arguments, no knowledge, just...one...word. Allowing one word arguments to be enough to produce a judgment is a response that is more akin to the pavlovian drooling of dogs than the exercise of our capacity to reason. Single words like this provoke an automatic response in the darkest, dystopian, thought controlling way. Other words such as "patriotic", "unpatriotic", "godly", "ungodly", "activist", "hater", "green", "not green" are also used to pass yes-no evaluations onto any statement or argument. The example of socialism does not imply that this is a conservative phenomenon. Many so-called liberals also get caught up in the dismissal of reasoned discourse on core political issues as they embrace and express gossip, engage in bigotry, use whataboutism, value opinions over facts, and respond to one word triggers like a Pavlovian dog. When single word triggers are used, many conservatives and liberals in the U.S. function by erasing the knowledge of whatever speech or text is in focus and proceed to pass a simple value judgment of thumbs up or down, yes or no. Knowledge is erased and value judgments are made in the absence of the exercise of our capacity to reason. The use of a single word to replace a whole translation or argument sounded impossible when described in Orwell's *1984 Appendix: Principles of Newspeak*. However, the use of just one word in this exact Orwellian style is alive and well in U.S. dystopian political talk.

### **Reducing Vocabulary Through Slogans Memes, and Talking Points**

A very destructive vocabulary reducing habit is our overwhelming reliance on slogans, memes, and talking points to express the whole of our talk on political issues. The repetition of brief talking points, glib platitudes, shallow marketing slogans, and hideously abbreviated memes is the dominant habit of politicians, media talking heads,

and the American people. Why bother with the tedious chore of responsibly examining the values, goals, principles, and problems of the nation through lengthy rational dialogue when we can just utter a single sentence or phrase, then shut down the conversation as we pretend to win an imaginary contest? When the parties and the corporate media allow detailed discussions, we see the time and space devoted to the bulk of the details are filled in with selected distraction issues, off topic gossip, bigoted ranting, or explanations of what a speaker wishes to be true. However, real knowledge-based talk and analysis, which require people to focus on the structures of issues, the detailing of facts, and the exercise of our capacity to reason about our knowledge are missing in action.

We are addicted to the use of slogans, memes, and party talking points. Instead of having thoughtful in-depth conversations about the values, goals, principles, and ideas that must be a part of the United States' necessary government, we communicate like advertisements. A significant number of voters prefer to express the whole of their political talk by merely wearing a meme tee shirt, placing a bumper sticker, planting a sign with a marketing slogan, reciting a short party talking point, or donning a hat with a slogan or meme printed on it. The art of well reasoned political conversation in the country has died. At the same time, tasty and time-efficient fragments of incoherent sayings and memes are consumed in mass through our American obsession with "tidbit understanding". When we abandon knowledge and reason in exchange for our obsession with slogans and talking points, we are participating in political talk like passive observers at a sporting event. We are not actually in the game but are merely rooting for our chosen team. In the United States, the repetition of superficial marketing slogans, memes, and talking points far outnumbers the in-depth dialogues that take seriously the need to rationally examine the issues in detail. A large number of United States citizens regularly mistake the utterance or transmission of a meme for a rationally competent response to dialogue.

When the height of human understanding reduces itself to the meager measure of mimetic competence, the best of our capacity to reason has died.

For most citizens, the centrally important play of the thoughtful free exchange of ideas is absent while the automatic, mindless regurgitation of slogans, memes, and party talking points fill up our conversations to make up the whole of political talk. When most of the public has been made content to sit on the sidelines to do little more than chant slogans, the real work of productive political discussion is abandoned. Putting a political sign in your yard, wearing a tee shirt, and chanting slogans is the cheering of a fan, not the work of a player who is in the game. Trading jabs back and forth against the perceived integrity of the parties is not a political discussion. It is a verbally abbreviated soap opera. Memorizing a meme does not constitute understanding. Relying on memes is intellectual passivity. The pathway to understanding is not competence at repeating memorized talking points and slogans. The only pathway to understanding is the real work involved in the free exchange of ideas, which employs our capacity to reason about our knowledge as we examine our values, goals, principles, and plans together. Hi-quality, rational political talk cannot be communicated through memes and slogans.

The most Orwellian thing about our obsession with fewer words is that we know better. It goes against our own common sense to allow for the breakdown of language and thought in political talk, when we do not tolerate it anywhere else. Nobody buys a home on the basis of a slogan. The home buyer gives due diligence by asking questions and examining the house thoroughly. If you met a seller who only had slogans to offer you in the sales pitch, but would not let you check out the house, you would not do business with that seller. In practical affairs, nobody thinks a meme is enough to create an adequate understanding of any complex task. More detail, more dialogue, more thought, more skill is needed to understand and address complex issues. Yet we give politics a pass. We allow the parties and corporations to reduce the greater part of our political conversations and understanding to single word labels, slogans, memes, and short party talking points. When the full depth of detailed, rational political dialogue is abandoned in exchange for cheaper, shorter, and shallower tidbits of slogans and memes, we must admit we have failed our country and ourselves by allowing our reliance on knowledge and reason to die in our political talk.

### **Reducing Perspectives Through Simplistic Dichotomies**

Every time I hear a citizen of the United States claim with an air of satisfaction that they got "both" sides of the story, I feel an Orwellian chill rising up my spine. On the most important issues in the governance of the United States, there are a range of perspectives and not just two. In the United States, we have the extraordinary habit of reducing everything down to only two sides. The top five dichotomies most used in the U.S. are Republican vs. Democrat, left vs. right, conservative vs. liberal, religious vs. atheist, capitalism vs. socialism, and in general, us vs. them. Simplistic dichotomies are an element in the dominant style of framing issues. As we said earlier with regard to the operation of the Newspeak language, "The possibility of nuanced thought is eliminated along with the vocabulary in order to secure the absolute dominance of simplistic dichotomies in the people's use of language." By arranging all political talk in terms of simplistic dichotomies, the U.S. style of Orwellian talk effectively reduces vocabulary and removes shades of meaning from public discourse. It is unnecessary to edit the language of a people or burn books in order to stop them from using their freedom of speech for all it is worth.

Reducing the perspectives available to the public for consideration is a primary function of the Orwellian model of U.S. political talk. The full diversity of perspectives cannot even occur to most people if they never get the opportunity to witness them. If an issue is always spoken of in terms of being either "X" or "Y", then the "A, B, Cs" of any issue will never be known. The complete knowledge, thought, and meaning that comes with allowing the discussion of a full range of perspectives dies. This effect of eliminating the possible nuances of meaning, which comes with thinking about a greater range of perspectives, is the same effect that was sought through the reduction of vocabulary in Orwell's *1984*.

We see this when Syme tells Winston Smith, "Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller." [25]

A greater level of reduced vocabulary and perspective is achieved by simplifying the top three dichotomies in the U.S. and merging them into one super dichotomy. This super dichotomy is continuously being used to restrict the range of perspectives allowed in public talk about political and social issues. It is structured around the six words we discussed in the "One Word Translations and Arguments" section. In all media following the corporate Orwellian model, every issue is presented in terms of one vastly oversimplifying dichotomy using the six words. Republican and Democrat, conservative and liberal, left and right, are used almost all the time to reduce the full range of perspectives on complex issues so that everything is falsely associated with two simplistically defined categories. The two fake positions, Republican-Conservative-Right (RCR) and Democrat-Liberal-Left (DLL), do not exist as clearly definable perspectives. Although the terms Republican and Democrat are precisely defined, the terms conservative-liberal and left-right, which are most often used to refer to imaginary demographic categories, are just fake labels that function to cover up the extraordinary diversity of perspectives available to the public conversation in the United States.

The abbreviated representation of political talk on issues in terms of only a single RCR and DLL point of view creates simplistic binary opposition that is an imaginary construction based on the false unification (or elimination) of a larger range of perspectives. The full diversity of perspectives within conservatism (detailed below) and the full range of the perspectives within progressive thought are massively reduced down to a binary representation of the RCR-DLL dichotomy. This binary representation only presents perspectives that are more favorable to corporate interests. A narcissistic duopoly of the parties publicly reinforces this imaginary RCR vs. DLL super dichotomy. The leadership of the two dominant parties are all about getting the nation to pay attention only to them. Of course the GOP wants to be seen as representing ALL conservative and right-oriented perspectives. Of course, the Democratic party (DNC) wants to be seen by ALL liberal-left people as being relevant. The corporate media are also very eager to restrict the range of possible perspectives down to just the two parties who function as wholly-owned subsidiaries of corporate America. Neither the RCR nor the DLL is a single demographic with a single perspective.

There is more principled diversity of thought and perspective in conservatism alone than is ever allowed to be regularly presented to the public by the parties or the media for the entire RCR-DLL super dichotomy. (See our essay "*The Beauty of The Conservative Mind: Conservatism and The Examined Life*" for our take on the foundation of conservative diversity) The GOP policy positions, platform, and party behavior do not represent the full diversity of conservatism. The full diversity of the perspectives within the Republican Party alone includes but is not limited to: traditional Burkean conservatives, Libertarians, Neoconservatives, Paleoconservatives, the Christian right, moderate and liberal Log Cabin Republicans, the Tea Party movement, and QAnon adherents. There is also a measurable diversity of thought and perspective within each of the conservative groups listed above. The full range of conservative or so-called

"Republican" perspectives is never allowed into the discussions about politics in the mainstream media, not even close. The reduction of all public political talk to mostly GOP approved party talking points, slogans, and partisan rhetoric constitutes the destruction of real diversity within conservative perspectives on politics as seen in the media in the United States.

Making out the fake Republican-Conservative-Right (RCR) to be a true representation of conservative perspective is a false equivalence that has been deliberately constructed by the GOP and corporate media. This false equivalence is a mendacious effort to associate "Republican" with all that is conservative and right. It is incoherent nonsense. The fake RCR is merely an attempt to manipulate a larger demographic into predictable voting performances. The truth is that there is more diversity of thought and perspective in the Christian right alone than is ever allowed to be presented by the corporate media or represented by the policy positions, platform, or behaviors of the GOP. Christians can have extraordinary diversity of thought, yet remain identified with the "right". From those who want Christian theocracy, to Christians who put the U.S. Constitution just under the Bible, to Christians who identify as "right" but whose perspectives resemble the best of socially progressive thought, the full range of Christian thought alone within conservatism exceeds the corporate tolerance for the range of perspectives that is allowed in public political talk.

The same problem exists with the false equivalence of Democrat-Liberal-Left. The DLL is an imaginary consolidation of progressive perspectives created to manipulate the public into falsely limiting all possible discussions of progressive values, thought, and perspectives to those sponsored by the corporately controlled Democrat Party. The DLL is promoted publicly to secure predictable voting performances. The full range of progressive thought could generate a list longer than the one above for the Republican Party. Suffice it to say that the corporate aligned centrist perspectives of the fake Democrat-Liberal-Left category are the only views allowed to be regularly represented in the mainstream media.

Another popular media and party trick is to call out a center-oriented position as being "extreme", "radical", or "far left". They do this to ensure that centrists, whose positions are more favorable to corporate interests, are the only publicly visible left. The media labeling President Elect Biden as a "Socialist" or "far left" is a good example. Biden is a centrist politician who has a closer resemblance to Republicans than to anyone on the far left. When the people are conditioned to think of the center as socialist or far-left, then the media has successfully reduced the range of possible perspectives that can be considered by the public to those that most favor corporate interests. The actual left is never seen on corporate media unless it is done in order to present a strawman. Similarly, traditional conservatives, who actually have an esteemed heritage, values, and principles that are more important to them than the GOP are never regularly allowed to have their say in the corporately sponsored public spotlight.

The media does not give us anywhere near all of the diverse perspectives, which the six words naturally imply. They only give us their truncated, corporation-favoring version of

the two fake super dichotomy perspectives (RCR, DLL). These two fake perspectives function in the context of removing our knowledge of diverse perspectives on issues, removing principles for the guidance of thought, and removing as much vocabulary for the expression of knowledge as is possible. The fake RCR and DLL positions that are regularly presented in the media serve the interest of corporations to restrict the creative breadth of thought about political issues. All issues are framed in a simple, manageable dichotomy that is more closely aligned with corporate interests than would ever be possible with a full range of real-world perspectives. The maximum effect of this dichotomy occurs when in combination with the principle of "One Word Translations and Arguments". All the people need to hear is left or right, conservative or liberal, Democrat or Republican, and they are ready to make a choice. The publicly visible understandings of the two fake RCR-DLL perspectives are already well known, and no new thoughts are required. Combine this with a bit of partisan bigotry, and just labeling a person or idea with an RCR or DLL label ends the need for thoughtful conversation. A simplistic yes or no is brought forth not by the reasoned examination of ideas on the issues but through the knee-jerk pavlovian drooling that pours forth when hearing a reference to one of the six words associated with the RCR-DLL dichotomy.

When the full range of perspectives is hidden from public view, the absence of diversity of perspectives helps the six words have that "one-word" power. This tends to manifest in a simplistic yes-no dynamic in conversations. Persuading without knowledge and getting people to give a simple "Yes" or "No" for political parties and their policy positions is the primary marketing interest in the Orwellian style of U.S. political talk. Giving a thumbs up or thumbs down to policy positions without using our capacity to reason about different perspectives because we are committed to one of the sides in the fake RCR-DLL dichotomy is the wealthy power's ideal of perfect political talk. When knowledge is avoided, vocabulary reduced, and perspectives limited, then the people's reasoning is reduced to its simplest form. Voting without giving due diligence to reasoning about the issues is the payoff for corporate business interests and the corporately controlled political parties. The perspective eliminating simplistic dichotomy of Republican-Conservative-Right vs. Democrat-Liberal-Left is the reason for the Orwellian chill we should all feel when someone says about a complex social or political issue, "I got both sides of the story."

### **Reducing Perspectives Through Media Echo Chambers**

The last person you should want to talk to is the person who always thinks exactly like you. That is not a conversation. It is an echo. Getting trapped in "echo chambers" is something to be avoided. When we do all of our talking on the issues with people who already think just like us, we have entered an echo chamber. We enter an echo chamber when we watch only news sources that are similar to our own perspectives. We are merely listening to the echo of our own voice when we read or interact with internet social media sources that simply repeat our own perspectives. This carries the same weakness as being unreceptive to different ideas. It is a way of avoiding knowledge by constraining ourselves to merely hearing an echo of what we already

think. It is a way of reducing vocabulary by only talking in ways that fit our preapproved narratives. It is a way of reducing the range of our perspectives because the only thing you ever see, hear, or read is what you already know, think, say, and believe.

When we know our first attempt at solving a problem fails, common sense tells us that we need more perspectives than the one that just failed. This is always true. Nobody thinks, "Hey, I will just keep repeating the same ideas and doing exactly the same thing again and again until it turns out differently and solves the problem." Nobody believes this is sound advice for ordinary problems in daily life. Einstein believed that doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results was a definition of insanity. U.S. politics has a rich history of failing to solve problems time and time again. U.S. political talk also has a rich history of saying and doing the same broken things over and over and over. Echo chambers are pathways to delusions. Our rationality stagnates like still waters that become putrid over time in the absence of the diversity of thought and ideas.

We all know the benefit of a diversity of perspectives when we fail to solve a problem in daily life. When we fail, we always want to do it better or differently. We never believe that the exact same failed knowledge and performance is going to solve the exact same problem if we just keep repeating ourselves. Yet we defy our own common sense with politics and allow ourselves and our political representatives to rehash the same failing frameworks of talk over and over. We over indulge the bad habit of talking only with those who think like us. When we voluntarily exclude a diversity of perspectives, we do with our freedom of speech what Orwell's authoritarian government sought to do through torture and censorship. In our delusional overconfidence in our own claims of knowledge, we allow the whole of political talk to be reduced to an echo of our own voice. As a consequence, we wind up staring into a dirty, broken mirror where we see nothing new, gain nothing, learn nothing, and hold ourselves accountable to nothing.

### **Destroying American Reasoning Through Time and Space Constraints**

What do frozen dinners and the network news have in common? The answer is that we know how to get a low-quality product fast. A few minutes in the microwave or a few minutes of political discussion between commercial breaks is all the time it takes to reduce our standards of consumption. The time and space limitations in our most popular network programming and social media regularly fail to offer enough room to exercise our capacity to reason about issues effectively. This has the effect of massively reducing the knowledge, vocabulary, and perspectives that can be expressed within the media's time and space constraints. The time and space limits within our network and social media formats force the participants to speak and write with an excessive concision that works to cut short the due process of our reasoning powers.

Concision is not a bad thing when used properly. It is good to be concise when we do not use unnecessary words and are doing a good job avoiding unnecessary redundancy



in our speech and writing. It is an excellent thing to spell out the essentials of our meaning in an efficient and clarifying manner. However, we exceed a point of diminishing return with the kind of forced concision that comes from the media's time and space limitations. The media's time and space limits force people into an unrelenting need to use as few words as possible in their speech and writing. Their attempts to be concise while speaking about complex social and political issues end up destroying the full process of reasoning about the issues. It is a good thing when we are concise in describing an idea, a value, a principle, a problem, or a solution. Being concise while describing things is a great benefit to the clarity of conversation. But reasoning about an idea, a value, a principle, a problem, or a solution is not a description. It is a process. This process takes more time and space in order to be complete than is typically available in the network and social media. Reasoning will often be a prolonged affair due to the complexity of issues or the inability to find satisfactory solutions.

Effective concision that efficiently describes our meanings is very different from the idea of forcing people to try to be too brief when it is time to exercise a capacity to reason. Reducing the number of words used in order to increase the clarity and quality of our speech is good. Shortcutting the full process of examining the issues in a way that damages the exercise of our capacity to reason is an Orwellian nightmare in U.S. politics. Using only 15 words instead of 100 words to effectively describe a policy position so that it fits into the time slot of a program or the character limit of a tweet is a good thing to do. Giving up on examining different perspectives or asking important questions about a policy position because there is not enough time or space in the chosen media destroys our ability to publically reason together about the subject under discussion. Voluntary concision always works to communicate our descriptive meanings with clarity and efficiency. The involuntary concision that is forced upon conversation participants, who have no choice but to always meet the time and space limits of the corporate media with as few words as possible, works to make it impossible to have a higher quality of rational conversation.

This method to reduce the diversity and quality of public talk has been going on for a long time and had its first notable mention by Noam Chomsky in the 1990's. He described the media as serving a propaganda function where the time limits of the corporate media were too severe to allow for any talk except what was already widely known and approved. This worked because only conventional, widely known and accepted statements and claims could be uttered without being forced to provide additional explanations, context, evidence, or valid arguments. The unconventional or unexpected ideas and narratives that exist outside of what is most familiar, approved, and repeated require significant explanation, which just takes too long. Chomsky spoke of the problem of trying to express unexpected ideas in the concise U.S. media format,

"The beauty of concision, you know, saying a couple sentences between two commercials, the beauty of that is you can only repeat conventional thoughts...I don't need any evidence, everybody just nods. On the other hand, suppose you're saying something that isn't just regurgitating conventional pieties, suppose you say something

that's the least bit unexpected or controversial...people will quite reasonably expect to know what you mean. 'Why did you say that? I never heard that before.' If you said that you'd better have a reason, better have some evidence...You can't give evidence if you're stuck with concision. That's the genius of this structural constraint. "

Only a small range of known conventional perspectives can be expressed without explanation within the time limitations of network media programming. This convenient formatting trick allows corporately owned media to automatically exclude the possibility of the rational discussion of ideas and narratives they do not want the public to see. When time and space are scarce, we give up accountability to knowledge, use less vocabulary, and drop the full range of perspectives needed to express productive and creative political talk. We give up what is necessary to be useful in exchange for the mechanical, time-efficient repetition of conventional ideas that are often expressed as pat answers, brief slogans, and short party talking points.

When corporations work to control what "conventional pieties" will become the focus of our highly repeated conventional understandings (Piety: a natural obligation; dutifulness in religion; a conventional belief or standard), the media's overly brief time limits do the rest of the work to exclude all other perspectives. Network programming does not provide the time required for the full benefit of rational discussion. This limitation is often amplified by the common practice of using too many people than is appropriate for the time involved. When the time between two commercial breaks is filled in with half a dozen people who are just trying to get a word in edgewise, there can be no depth or substance of reasoning. The time and space limits of the media eliminate the possibility of working together to discover new ideas and perspectives.

When people are forced to be optimally concise at all times, this constrains their talk to what is most commonly repeated in the absence of an adequate amount of questions and examinations. This is a significant problem because what is most commonly repeated should also be regularly questioned and examined. However, severe time and space limitations in the media work brilliantly to guide viewers' attention onto our accepted conventional agreements without the time needed to ask any fundamentally useful questions. As our conventional agreements are repeated over and over, we find that the full scope of their meaning, the nature of their assumed values and principles, and the underlying normative claims that come with our "conventional pieties" are left unexamined and invisible. Overly concise talk short cuts our reasoning to the effect that all conversation involving any controversy will be a plain grasping for a simplistic yes or no result. Severe time limits do not allow for nuances of meaning, diverse perspectives for complex issues, or the questions needed to advance thought. When the corporations and the political parties control the public visibility, and therefore the possibility, of all of our yes's and no's, the work of the Orwellian U.S. political model of talk is complete.

The power of the media's time and space limitations to destroy the opportunities for reasoning together is reinforced by the general decay of substantive content in the media. In the 1990's, Carl Sagan noted the decay of our society in terms of the decay of our reasoning powers. Sagan saw a day in the future when,

"awesome technological powers are in the hands of a very few, and no one representing the public interest can even grasp the issues; when the people have lost the ability to set their own agendas or knowledgeably question those in authority; when...our critical faculties in decline, unable to distinguish between what feels good and what's true, we slide, almost without noticing, back into superstition and darkness."[26]

Carl Sagan saw us moving towards the stupefying decay of our capacity to reason about social and political issues. Sagan drew a correlation between our mental decline and the quality of what is presented in the public media. Regarding the role of the media in our mental decline, Sagan wrote,

"The dumbing down of America is most evident in the slow decay of substantive content in the enormously influential media, the 30-second sound bites (now down to 10 seconds or less), lowest common denominator programming, credulous presentations on pseudoscience and superstition, but especially a kind of celebration of ignorance. As I write, the number one video cassette rental in America is the movie Dumb and Dumber. Beavis and Butthead remains popular (and influential) with young TV viewers. The plain lesson is that study and learning - not just of science, but of anything - are avoidable, even undesirable."[27]

The Orwellian tasks of avoiding knowledge, reducing vocabulary, reducing the range of perspectives available to the public, and destroying the public's ability to reason are supported through the media's inappropriately restrictive time limits of time and space for political talk. These tasks are also supported by the characteristics noted in Sagan's description of the "dumbing down of America". The increasing shortening of sound bites, which Sagan noted, complements media time and space limitations very well. When the quickly expressed tidbit understanding provided by short sound bites, slogans, and memes becomes the whole of public talk, the decay of the people's capacity for reasoning is at hand. Sagan also noted the decay of the quality of content in the media. The media's abundant focus on "lowest common denominator programming" works to reduce the full range of perspectives available to the public. The pretense of rational examination that goes with the "credulous presentations on pseudoscience and superstition" leads people to lower their standards for the examination of claims of knowledge. The overwhelming popularity of sitcoms, soap operas, movies, sports, video games, and other distractive entertainments fills up the airtime and our spare time, creating less time and space for the people to exercise their minds in a useful manner.[28] The "celebration of ignorance" and personal dysfunction that we see in the distractive entertainments promoted by popular media lay hold to much of our attention span. This media focus encourages us to cultivate a tolerance for using less knowledge, less vocabulary, and fewer perspectives than are required for the expression of productive, useful thought.

It is not enough for the corporate media's time limit's to constrain our talk to the conventional pieties that are accepted by the masses. The nature and content of the conventional understandings, which will be widely accepted and repeated in public,

must be controlled and restricted so only the ideas that help corporations take what they want will be publicly repeated. Since the primary tactic of subversive theft is to destroy the people's capacity to reason, you cannot have conventional pieties that inherently call people to exercise their capacity to reason. For example, you will never see the corporate news promoting an idea such as "Question Everything!" so that it can become the most widely accepted slogan of American political thought. The network media's vision of convention perfection is that the set of widely accepted conventional ideas and ways of interpreting the world must never lead people to a more thoughtful conversation, or to encourage the people to indulge in the independent interpretation of values, goals, and and principles. Avoided as much as possible and at all cost is anything that opens up the people to conversations requiring more time and space devoted to effective reasoning about the issues. Such an anti-Orwellian convention as "Question Everything!" challenges the function of concision and works against all the rest of the Orwellian methods. A consumer market that loves to question everything will not support a media product that forces them to cut short their passion for questions. A consumer market that loves to indulge many questions will never buy (vote for) a party who only wants their followers to mindlessly repeat what the wealthy oligarchs want them to say. The perfect consumer in the Orwellian environment of political talk is the one who pays the wealthy powers to tell them what to think and say. Developing this kind of consumer market is the holy grail of the Orwellian-style of U.S. political talk. The possibility of widely accepted conventional agreements that call people to question and think responsibly is anathema to the Orwellian system of political talk in the United States.

Therefore, it is impossible for the anti-Orwellian conventional piety of "Question Everything!" to be promoted by the corporate media or the political parties. The nature of such a convention is antithetical to the public communication goals of corporations, which are well served through forced concision and the popularity of abbreviated, thoughtless talk. The perfect corporately approved conventional piety, which will be repeated often in front of the public, is any notion that can function like an empty cliché, which can be simultaneously the home to everything and the home to nothing. The perfect Orwellian conventional saying must also function in a context that does not offer people the opportunity to give due diligence to question and define what they are agreeing upon.

A natural result of time and space limitations is to destroy the meaning and power of our conventional agreements. This destruction happens regularly because it is easy for anyone to make a time-efficient generic claim that we should support values and principles associated with freedom, democracy, justice, patriotism, morality, godliness, or country. People make such claims without defining either what these ideals mean or how we can identify what kind of support is useful, honorable, and consistent with our known ethics and goals. When most people hear such basic claims, they just nod in agreement. Who doesn't agree with the simple and appealing forms of undefined value statements such as "We should secure our freedom!", "We must have justice!", or we should all want to "Make America Great Again!". Yet without defining exactly what these things mean in rational conversations devoted to questioning our ideas, values, goals,

and principles, we are ignoring the real work it takes to make our values and principles stand up and live. The travel time from a conventional piety upheld with knowledgeable agreement to an empty abomination of conventional neglect is short. If *We The People* desire to be able to live in more perfect union, live out the fullness of our established Justice, have confidence that domestic tranquility is being insured, participate meaningfully in a common defense and the general welfare, and enjoy the blessings of liberty, we must not let these constitutional goals become empty clichés that we allow to remain undefined.[29] A nation cannot implement and fulfill a Constitution, which serves these purposes, if the people do not know or agree upon what these purposes mean.

Producing programming content and providing social media that continuously replaces whole conversations with fragments of ideas and replaces principled wisdom with mere wit is the high achievement of the corporate media. A clichéd slogan replaces a whole perspective. A meme fragment replaces a cogent argument. A short party talking point replaces the necessary length of the questioning and examination of issues. The result is that the power, the genius, and the productivity normally available to rational conversations about social and political issues are destroyed in a cloud of disconnected fragments. When time and space are short, and the people are always forced to be too concise, only that which is easy to repeat in a short amount of time is shown to the public. Only that which can be spoken without too much reasoning will be allowed to be consumed.

The only time a cogent narrative with proper questions and examinations is allowed to be seen is when the topic is focused on one of the distractions described by the Orwellian methods in this essay. For example, it is easy to fit irrelevant gossip and bigoted partisan ranting into the constraints of concision. Bigoted gossip has no need for any context of relevance to social and political issues past the ad hominem barking of the moment. Therefore bigoted gossip is fast and fragmented by nature. Partisan bigoted gossip is perfect for the Orwellian time and space limits forced on us by network programming and social media. When the focus is on a proper political subject, the function of the Orwellian style of talk is to destroy the possibilities of having a cogent, principled narrative emerge from rational discussion. Real political talk, which by definition requires that we reason together about our shared values, principles, and goals, is replaced at best with the rapid-fire exchange of empty clichés about values, goals, and principles. At worst, a powerfully useful rational dialogue is replaced with empty bigoted ranting, finger-pointing, name-calling, and other distractions useful for throwing real political talk into the trash. Turning rational talk into trash is what naturally happens when people are always forced to be as concise as possible in an environment where "lowest common denominator programming" becomes the highest achievement in the tactics of theft. It is the agenda of corporate news and social media to work towards the goal of ensuring that oversimplified, unprincipled, and irrational social and political talk is the only social and political talk. The Orwellian function of the media's time and space limits is to make invisible the real purpose of political talk, which is to rationally examine our values, goals, principles, and plans in the context of governing the nation. The thieves who want to steal the life right out from under you can never

allow you to witness the rational examination of this nation's shared values, goals, and principles. All that is visible when the dust of forced concision settles is that which the corporations want to promote.

The decay of substantive content programming throughout the media helps prepare the people to accept the degeneration of political talk into a steaming pile of useless nothing. Nothing helps us digest useless political talk quite as well as decades of consuming a big steaming pile of the media's "celebration of ignorance" and "credulous presentations of pseudoscience", all served up on a smorgasbord of "lowest common denominator programming". **The deadly result is that the important task of defining our nation's most sacred conventional agreements does not occur in the rational examination of our shared values, goals, and principles, but occurs in the absence of rationally defining or examining anything at all.** This is how a decayed and corrupt national media does social and political talk. A common form of abuse is to support a policy position or a candidate with generic, empty claims about values, principles, or some derivative benefit that pass before the public without ever defining what these things mean. We throw talk about values, goals, and principles around without ever having a rational conversation about how supporting the policy or candidate in question will cohere with the fulfillment of our values, goals, and principles. Instead of having productive conversations that focus on making sure our conventional pieties are not an empty wasteland of meaningless clichés, we allow ourselves to get lost in the destructive irrelevance of the Orwellian style of U.S. political talk.

The full amount of knowledge, vocabulary, and perspective that are required to reason about politics are reduced to the repetition of empty, unexamined conventional pieties, which are expected to be automatically repeated without evidence, context, background, or thought. The annihilation of reasoning in our political talk, as our talk degenerates into the time-efficient repetition of empty clichés, irrelevant gossip, partisan bigotry, and other distractions, is brought forth through the corporate news and social media to the public in order to make us free. The wealthy oligarchs want us to be free. They want us to be free from our own unique perspectives; free from the dictates of our own reasoning; free from the burden of examining our own values and principles; free from evidence and context; free from logically valid arguments; free from the labor of questioning anything effectively; and free from all the demands of intellect so that we may obtain the same glorious liberty that was possessed by the citizens of Orwell's Oceania,

"What opinions the masses hold, or do not hold, is looked on as a matter of indifference. They can be granted intellectual liberty because they have no intellect." - George Orwell, 1984

In the Orwellian style of U.S. political talk, "Freedom is Slavery". Today the corporate media manifests the most severe time and space limitations ever. Many speakers on commentary programs no longer plan to make valid arguments. Instead, they merely hope to score a tasty five to ten-second sound bite, whose intellectual integrity is more at home in a supermarket tabloid than in a substantive political discussion.

The phenomenon of the media's time and space limitations harming the quality of our conversations is much broader now than when Chomsky and Sagan made their observations in the 1990s. The effect of the time and space limitations found in TV network programming, whose brevity forces the people's conversational concision into excess and diminishes the possibilities of human reasoning, has extended to our personal communication habits. **The blip of words that comes with a tweet or the flash of an image and a phrase that comes with an internet meme are examples of the fact that our most popular communication formats continue to get more and more abbreviated. Rationality has less room than ever to express itself in a single act of communication.** When we express our freedom of speech through the limitations of social media, which is given to us without cost, part of the real price we pay is the freedom we lose when we fail to take the time and space necessary to give due diligence to grounding our communications in knowledge and reasoning. Such ground requires giving explanations of context, background, and logically valid arguments that will never fit into a single tweet or a meme. The super concise internet formats of communication dramatically increase the phenomenon of people speaking "at" one another without listening to or talking with one another. What is most suitable to being repeated without thought is what tends to go viral the most in the social media. It is the conventional pieties of a meme culture that fits best with the concision that is forced upon us by the limitations of space in the most frequent expressions of our social media.

Even the presidential debates illustrate the harsh impact of time limits where candidates competing to be the leader of the most complex and powerful nation in the history of humanity only have the ridiculous time of a minute or two to answer a question vital to the interest of the whole nation. With such presidential concision, reasoned discourse about the public good gets replaced with the sloganeering marketing of parties. Expressing our capacity to reason in words take time and space. Our most popular media's time and space limitations are formatting the possibility of high-quality rational conversations right out of existence.

When our politics are conformed to the requirements that come with just being another consumer product, the habits of political talk in the U.S. will also conform to our consumer conditioning, which embrace the time limits of instant gratification. People are conditioned for instant gratification in many aspects of our culture. The speed of microwaves, delivery pizza, playing video games, the pattern of doing everything between commercial breaks, all help condition us to go for the fast resolve instead of seeking quality. Our addictions to drugs, alcohol, sex, porn, binge eating, cell phones, online shopping, gambling, video games, and risky behaviors are all signs that we are in the grip of a culture well acquainted with indulging our lust for instant gratification.

Our massive conditioning for instant gratification is deadly to the patience and persistence required for high-quality reasoning. We are naturally conditioned to follow our instincts more reliably than our reason. We yield to desire and seek to eliminate uncertainty quickly. We are more focused on generating the dopamine rush that comes with instant gratification than on giving due diligence to the comparatively tedious work

of thinking. We are conditioned to respond to distractions and give up a quality focus on the real work of effectively examining our values, goals, and principles. We trade serious political talk for focusing on what is more entertaining. The intense desire for a quick "win" in political talk reduces the quality of and motivations for our political dialogues to the interactive rush we get from a free video game. Tedious things such as holding ourselves accountable to verifying knowledge, reasoning about issues, and being honest about our values, goals, and principles cannot compete with the rush of instant gratification. We have been conditioned to drool on single word commands like pavlovian dogs instead of working diligently to ensure that our political talk is of a high quality. The lure of instant gratification helps us embrace the media's time and space limitations as the way to be. Our conditioning in favor of instant gratification is in itself a form of forcing excessive concision where the time and space devoted to our rational process is cut short by our intemperate lust to be satisfied now.

With the help of time and space limits, our most commonly expressed habits of talk have been guided through corporately owned networks and social media to an austere minimalist posture. This broken posture is focused on producing the unreasoned yet instantly gratifying repetition of disconnected talking points, irrational changes of topic, insults, memes, marketing slogans, and other random distractions. We rapidly repeat these broken tidbits of fragmented understanding without the need for the tedious work of providing context, evidence, valid arguments, or paying rigorous attention to the facts of the issues at hand. Even when we are saying conventional thoughts that are familiar to everyone, forced concision demands that our conventions be spoken or written without evidence, context, or thought beyond that required for repeating a cliché. The corporately owned media's time and space limits makes fully reasoned argument, even between two conventional and familiar positions, nearly impossible. When the time and space given to our communication shrinks, reasoning dies proportionally. Ensuring that there is not enough time, space, vocabulary, differences of perspective, accountability to knowledge, or gratifying interest needed to have a fully rational conversation about political issues is the ground upon which the Orwellian model of U.S. political talk walks in order to achieve its goal of destroying the people's capacity to reason.

The bottom line is that we must pay more attention to holding ourselves accountable to knowledge, give more direct effort to our reasoning, and dedicate more work to our political talk than we give to acquiring fast food. Nobody would accept a lack of provision for the time, space, or resources necessary to accomplish a practical task, such as painting a house, or fixing a car, tying our shoelaces, or picking up a happy meal from McDonald's. Yet, we have allowed ourselves to flagrantly give up on ensuring that we make sufficient time and space necessary to exercise our ability to reason about the issues of governing our nation. Nobody would accept an empty cliché as the principled foundation of running a business. Yet, we have denied our own knowledge and common sense by allowing our political talk to be filled with nice-sounding but empty clichés. We neglect to give due diligence to examining what we believe with the efforts of our own reasoning. We deserve to demand from our congressional representatives, our president, and ourselves at least as much accountability to knowledge, reasoning, and honesty in our political talk as we demand from the cashier



at McDonald's when we buy a cheeseburger. Instead of giving sufficient time and space to exercise our capacity to reason, we have allowed our reliance on knowledge, reasoning, and honesty to die in our political talk. Out of our own freedom of speech, We The People of the United States have given birth to a perfect Orwellian storm.

### **The Perfect Orwellian Storm: Freedom is Slavery**

"Who controls the past",  
ran the Party slogan,  
"controls the future:  
who controls the present  
controls the past."  
- George Orwell, *1984*

A Hopi proverb brings forth the essential meaning of the Orwell quote above into its simplest form. The proverb is,

"The one who tells the stories rules the world."

In both George Orwell's *1984* and in U.S. political talk, the primary theft that underlies the theft of a nation is the hijacking of the public narrative by wealthy powers. Controlling the content of the public narrative on the nation's social and political issues is the end goal of the corporate corruption of political talk in the United States. *We The People*, through our free and willful abdication of knowledge, reason, and honesty in political talk, help them get away with it.

The one who disregards their own knowledge and reasoning is not the one who tells their own stories, but is the one who mindlessly repeats the stories that others tell. In the abdication of our reliance upon our own knowledge, what stories can we tell? What narrative can we craft? The one who only uses a few borrowed words is not the one who tells their own stories. In the absence of using our own words and our own thoughts, we use the words and thoughts that others have shaped for us. What narrative about the public good can we author when we merely repeat what others tell us? The one who does not reason is not the one who can regale a nation with their own story. When our own reasoning dies, we become the servants of the reasoning of others. When knowledge, reasoning, and honesty die in political talk, the storytelling power of the people dies with it. Instead of being a force of creation that relies on our own knowledge of the heritage of our past and our own independent reasoning to interpret the present, we learn to faithfully repeat the stories that others are telling. In our mindless repetition of the parties' marketing slogans, memes, and talking points, we allow others to interpret the past for us. When we give up our own command of the past, we allow others to tell the stories that rule our world.

In *1984* a slogan of the party said,

"Who controls the past,  
controls the future:  
who controls the present  
controls the past."

When we learn to disregard the vetting of knowledge, the use of reasoning, and the value of honesty in political talk, we have given up our control of the past to others. There is no need to do as Big Brother did in 1984. The wealthy U.S. powers did not have to burn books, rewrite literature, or physically force people through torture to abandon their knowledge of the past. The Orwellian style of U.S. political talk does all of this by seducing the people to relinquish their command of the past voluntarily. From the hideous fact that a meme fragment can have more influence on millions of voters than the entire history of the heritage of their own values, principles, religion, and country, which they claim they want to conserve, to the disturbing reality that most American citizens behave as if they have the memory powers of a gnat, so easily forgetting tomorrow what was clearly said on video today, the citizens of the United States have lost their grip on the past. This is far more efficient than Orwell's vision of Newspeak. Today, the stories told by the wealthy powers and parties replace our own knowledge of the past because we have freely abandoned our reliance upon knowledge in political talk. Today, the corporate-sponsored storytellers are able to impose their narratives upon our minds. They can do this to the extent that we have given up on exercising our capacity to reason and therefore are more inclined to simplistically repeat that, to which we are exposed. In this Orwellian present, we lose the past because we have lost knowledge, reason, and honesty in our political talk. Accepting and repeating any and all lies for the sake of a partisan win destroys the power of the real, the factual past to have any influence upon our minds and lives. When we fail to use our own reasoning to interpret the past, we allow the corporations, the parties, and the wealthy special interests to override our own understanding of the past to become the ones shaping the stories we tell. They, the wealthy storytellers, are the ones with the power to rule the world in which we live.

The demographic in the United States most visibly devastated by the Orwellian habits of U.S. political talk is conservatives. Conservatives are the ones who most vigorously claim to have the stories to tell. Conservatives are the ones who claim to have the esteemed heritage, which contains the traditions, values, principles, and stories that ought to influence our thinking. Conservatives are the ones who most desire to bring the stories of the past to life in the present day. It is precisely the conservatives, the ones with the esteemed traditions, that are harmed the most when they are seduced into letting their heritage go. Trading in the heritage of an ancient civilization for the cheap talk of the moment defies common sense. Trading in the wisdom of time immemorial for empty marketing slogans, partisan bigotry, and the irrelevant gossip of the present hour is to kill the power of our past heritage to influence the present. This brings forth the death of conservatism. From "The Beauty of the Conservative Mind: Conservatism and The Examined Life",

"A deadly force that is destroying American conservatism on a massive scale is the dominance of forgetfulness and ignorance in the minds of self-proclaimed conservatives with regard to the heritage that they want to conserve. When we forget the moral, social, and political legacies of our civilization, our nation, our religions, and the history of thought, which have been vetted over many generations and centuries, the best of established customs and conventions cannot influence our thinking on current issues. Today, it is so common that the cartoonish meme of the current hour has more power of influence over the average conservative than the whole history of the established conventions and customs of an entire civilization. Today, a 10 second sound bite from some TV talking head has more weight in the thinking of many conservatives than the whole history of a nation or a religion. For many conservatives today, the life giving continuity with our heritage, which is the very soul of conservatism itself, is murdered in the sleep of forgetful ignorance."

The rest of America is not far behind. Few are the people who claim they have absolutely nothing to learn from history. Yet many are those who have lost some measure of their grip on the past. When we trade in the values, principles, governing priorities, and vetted conventions of the past for whatever cheap talk wins today, we lobotomize ourselves. When the past can no longer influence us, we give up the power to be the authors of our own present. We give up the power to write our own narratives and the wealthy storytellers have won. By not taking responsibility for our freedom of speech, we have given control of the past to others. We have become the servants of wealthy storytellers who control our futures by interpreting the past on our behalf. We have become so familiar with the concept of freedom that contempt is all we have left for it. In our contempt for our own freedom, we have neglected our responsibilities as free citizens of a democratic republic. We allowed ourselves to be seduced into not relying on our own knowledge, not expressing our own capacity to reason, not daring to use our own understanding for the issues of the day, and therefore not standing up as powerful citizens who have their own say in the affairs of the nation. We freely gave up our power and allowed the thieves to rule the day. We have created an Orwellian nightmare out of our own freedom to speak. Through the abdication of knowledge, reason, and honesty in U.S. political talk, we have voluntarily given up our power to tell our own story. Through the daily practice of the Orwellian habits of U.S. political talk, we have ensured that, "Freedom is Slavery".

The Orwellian habits of political talk rigorously work to avoid knowledge, reduce vocabulary, and restrict the range of our possible meanings and perspectives in order to destroy the people's capacity to reason. A common theme between Orwell's Oceania and the United States is that the complexity of our thought, the nuances of meaning in our speech, and the exercise of our capacity to reason are dramatically reduced so that simplistic binary options are all that is left. Yes-no, either-or logic dominates our partisan Red-Blue politics in the absence of substantive reasoning. The result is for all issues to be artificially framed by simplistic dichotomies in order to manipulate yes or no evaluations from voters in the absence of knowledge and reasoning. Producing predictable yes/no voter performances in the absence of the persuasion of knowledge

and the nuances of meaning that come with the exercise of our capacity to reason is the holy grail of the Orwellian habits of U.S. politics.

A similar binary reduction is also present with the theme of pure power that exists both in Orwell's *1984* and in U.S. politics. Look at the description of Orwell's Oceania below. All of the nuances of meaning and diversity of perspectives in *1984* are stripped away until the narrow either-or binary logic of pure power is all that is left.

"There will be no loyalty, except loyalty toward the Party. There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother. There will be no laughter, except the laugh of triumph over a defeated enemy. There will be no art, no literature, no science. When we are omnipotent we shall have no more need of science. There will be no distinction between beauty and ugliness. There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. All competing pleasures will be destroyed. But always—do not forget this, Winston—always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever." [30]

Does it seem impossible to you that this could exist in the U.S.? And yet, here we are. We live in a society where loyalty to the party is above loyalty to principles for many millions of citizens. No love has any meaning in the Orwellian style of U.S. political talk except the love of the party or a party leader. The love of power is true love in U.S. politics. There is no laughter in our partisan political talk except the laugh of triumph over a defeated enemy. The great joy in the Orwellian style of U.S. politics is not about serving the public good. It is about gaining victory over partisan enemies. There is no art, no literature, and no science that has any meaningful influence on the raw grab for power that has become dominant in U.S. politics. In the dystopian form of U.S. political talk, art, literature, and science, no matter what principles they articulate, are obsolete for influencing the loyalties of dedicated party fans. When we abandon knowledge, reason, and honesty in our political talk, only the binary logic of power means anything. For the partisan fan, truth has become irrelevant. The only truth is winning or losing. There is no beauty or ugliness in our dystopian form of political talk except that of winning or losing. In the Orwellian style of U.S. political talk, there is no curiosity or enjoyment about anything other than the prospect of gaining power. Only the beauty of gaining more power entices the loyal attention of the party fans. The lust for power allows the party fan to stomp on any truth, break any principle, and destroy any trusted convention of their heritage. In the dystopian habits of U.S. political talk there is only the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there is only the thrill of victory in the Orwellian habits of U.S. political talk.

Real politics is about the governance of a nation in service to the common good. So it is that the all-consuming lust for power is the birthright and end goal of all fake partisan politics. The Orwellian style of fake U.S. partisan politics cheapens and perverts real politics into everything it is not supposed to be. Partisan politics is a fake politics that

puts serving the Red or the Blue Team above serving the public good of the United States. Fake partisan politics is about indulging in irrelevant gossip and partisan bigotry. But real politics focuses on cooperative conversations. Fake partisan politics is always changing the topic, boasting about unsubstantiated opinions, and selectively focusing away from the most important issues. But real politics knows how to stay focused on real political issues, relies on knowledge and reasoning, and zeros in to focus on what is most needed to serve the good of the nation. Fake partisan politics is always reducing everything to a single word, a marketing slogan, or a meme as if the whole of political knowledge can be reduced to a blip of words that is mindlessly repeated. But real politics allows for the unfolding of knowledge through real conversations that are filled with questions and filled with our good faith towards one another as we reason together. Fake partisan politics wants to complete everything before the next commercial break, to finish the talk before the microwave is done cooking, to express the whole of our knowledge and perspectives in a tiny tweet or meme, to treat our political talk like a junk food addiction. But real politics takes the time, the effort, and the good faith given to our neighbors to realistically participate together in the difficult task of considering the issues of the nation. Fake partisan politics is repeating, in prison-like echo chambers, the same clichéd messages, which revolve around oversimplified dichotomies about the fake conflict between the Red and Blue Teams. But real politics feasts on the diversity of perspectives and knowledge, which lives in the minds of citizens seeking to serve the country. Fake politics does everything it can to disrespect our neighbors. But in real politics, the hospitality we offer our neighbor in our political talk is the true measure of the strength of our nation. In real politics we extend the good faith to listen to one another when we all work together as members of team U.S.A..

If we do not use our freedom of speech to honor one another with knowledgeable, rational, and honest political talk, then we are using our freedom to enslave ourselves to what is worst within us. The great Orwellian theme of U.S. politics is the transformation of our freedom into a weapon of tyranny. In the expression of our own freedom of speech, we are enslaving ourselves to everything Orwell's dystopian government of Big Brother sought to achieve. Orwell wrote in *1984* that one of the aims of the party is "to extinguish once and for all the possibility of independent thought."<sup>[31]</sup> In the United States, we engage in habits of political talk that also serve this dystopian aim by voluntarily reducing our reliance on knowledge and reasoning in our political thought, reducing the diversity of vocabulary and perspectives in U.S. political talk, and by eliminating all motives in our partisan dominated political conversations except the lust for power. In U.S. political talk, "Freedom is Slavery". In the United States there most certainly is a dystopian boot stamping on a human face; but it is our own boot stamping on our own face. We have the power to change this.

## SOCRATES AND THE ART OF POLITICAL REFORM

"The unexamined life is not worth living."  
- *Apology*, 38a

### Honesty is The Foundation of All Reform

"One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we've been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We're no longer interested in finding out the truth. The bamboozle has captured us. It's simply too painful to acknowledge, even to ourselves, that we've been taken."  
- Carl Sagan[32]

It is always true that in order to reform anything, one must first recognize that something is wrong. In the absence of sufficient honesty to self and others, we are incapable of such recognition. If we cannot be honest about what is wrong, we cannot make it better. Honesty is not just the beginning of reform. It is necessary at every step in making anything better. If the solution to a problem or the way to optimize our ability to function requires that we relate to facts, we must do so accurately. We cannot do well in a task that requires using the knowledge that  $2+2=4$  if we are lying to ourselves or others by insisting that  $2+2=5$ . Being honest about the facts of our knowledge is essential to living well. Being honest about the nature of our understanding is a prerequisite for human integrity, health, and power. Doing anything well, which requires knowledge, demands that we are able to be honest about our knowledge. If we want to reform political corruption, we must be honest about the origin and nature of our political corruption. Now, here is a bit of honest talk about what is wrong with our republic.

The government of our democratic republic, which is by design meant to represent the people, is corrupt to the extent that it no longer represents the people. It is not corrupt because a handful of powerful and wealthy bad actors have taken advantage. It is corrupt because *We The People* of the United States have fallen down on the job and abdicated our responsibilities as citizens. How can the government of a democratic republic represent the people if We The People have withdrawn from knowledgeable, rational, and honest participation in the politics of our nation? We defied our own common sense by allowing ourselves to abandon our natural and necessary capacity to reason in political talk and thereby allowed the government of our country to grow weak and sick. We despised our own knowledge by allowing ourselves to passionately indulge in irrelevant gossip, and thereby neglected the relevant knowledge, values, principles, and issues demanding our attention. We closed our hearts and minds in partisan bigotry towards one another and thus killed the patriotic cooperative unity, which is necessary to keep our country healthy.

We shunned the necessary use of words by allowing marketing slogans to replace reasoned arguments, allowing simplistic memes to replace whole perspectives, and

allowing empty labels to replace understanding. We disrespected the demands of knowledge and reason by not allowing enough time and space to do justice to having useful and rational dialogue on important issues. Tweets, memes, and the short time between commercial breaks became the abridged and overly limited horizons of time and space allowed for the exercise of reason. We allowed the wisdom of our ancient civilizations, the perspectives of our religions, and the entire history of our values, principles and ideas to be replaced by marketing slogans, party talking points, ad hominem arguments, and pat answers. Through the willful expression of our own freedom of speech and a lack of being honest about the dictates of our own common sense, we have allowed knowledge and reason to die in U.S. political talk.

In Orwell's *1984*, Winston Smith was forced, through extreme torture, to change his habits of thinking, writing, and talking so that he could not reason effectively about his country. In the United States, the wealthy powers do not torture. They have simply manipulated our freedom of speech to give us enough rope to hang ourselves. We know better than to allow our political talk to become so childish, empty, and useless. We know that we know better because we do not tolerate such poor behavior when solving our own problems in daily life. However, in politics, we defy our own knowledge and break with our own common sense in order to lay waste to our capacity to reason about political and social issues. Defying our own common sense and disregarding our own knowledge in order to stop reasoning about social and political issues is the essence of all that is Orwellian in the United States of America.

We do not speak Orwell's *Newspeak* in the United States. We speak in *Freespeak*, where our own freedom of speech has put us in bondage. We are free to speak, but are negligent about the quality of our speech. We are free to think, but fail to be diligent about attending to knowledge. We are free to contemplate and speak about all the values, goals, principles, ideas, perspectives, and issues pertaining to governing the nation and the nature of the public good. We are free to benefit our country with our political speech. However, instead of honoring that freedom with our best effort, we resign ourselves to obsessing about a sleazy national soap opera of personal failures. We are free to relate to one another with the full depth of our attention and creativity, but we freely allow inattentiveness, gossiping, the uncreative bigotries of partisan division, and a myopic vulnerability to being distracted to butcher the competence of our pursuit of happiness.

We are killing our nation with our freedom of speech, because we do not heed our own common sense about what it means to be responsibly free. Why do we acknowledge the absolute necessity of knowledge, reason, and honesty in solving the smallest problems in our daily life, but let them die when it comes to handling the most important issues of the nation? Are we really this blind or have we simply fallen asleep at the wheel? Most people in the United States do not responsibly talk politics on the basis of knowledge and the capacity to reason. We talk politics like we are playing a game. There is a serious lack of honesty in playing politics like a team sport, where you root for your team no matter what. Claiming to be correct on political issues because we have to root for the team no matter what the facts say is the deadliest habit of political talk in the

country. The most common bad habit of U.S. political talk is the habit of people refusing to admit errors. When we never admit to being wrong or ignorant, we have thrown the possibility of responsibility in the trash. The philosophy of, "I don't care what is true. Just give me what I want." is the philosophy of babies. We all know this is true because we all know we would reject this kind of whining in any aspect of our real daily lives.

Yet, in U.S. politics, we allow the contradiction of our own conscience and common sense in a way that we would never allow to pass in daily life. Far too many Americans follow a popular unspoken political dictum,

"Principles for thee but not for me."

This is the essential heart of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy has become a fundamental necessity of playing a zero sum partisan game of Red Team vs. Blue Team. If you know in your heart that what you forbid for your opponents' candidate and party you will allow for your own candidate and party, then you are being a hypocrite. In ordinary daily life, we do not accept blatant hypocrisy. Nobody would want to stay married to a spouse that demanded you be faithful in all things, but they can do whatever they please. Nobody wants to do business with a person who demands you obey the contract while they can do what they please. But in politics, the fans of one party often have no qualms demanding the opposing parties maintain higher standards of conduct and follow principles with greater fidelity. However, they are ok with letting their own party do whatever they can get away with in order to "win". Hypocrisy is the soul of partisan politics when the people fail to hold themselves accountable to the same standard of knowledge that we apply in ordinary life.

When we fail to hold ourselves honestly accountable to knowledge and reason, we let the integrity of our political talk become corrupt in one of or some combination of three ways.

**1. Ignorance:** We allow ourselves to remain ignorant because we failed to give due diligence to gaining and verifying knowledge. We allow ignorance to inform our priorities and choices. We are incapable of being accountable to knowledge that we do not possess. We are incapable of improving ourselves to the extent that we do not even know we are ignorant. Democracy dies in ignorance.

**2. Hypocrisy:** We have knowledge but fail to consistently apply our understanding of our values and principles. Thus we behave more like a hypocrite than an honest citizen. When what we allow for ourselves and our party is blazingly in contradiction with what we allow for others and their parties then we have disregarded our own knowledge hypocritically. If we criticize the candidate of an opposing party for saying or doing something but remain silent or even defend our own candidates when they say or do the same thing, then our knowledge, reason, and honesty are corrupted. In hypocrisy, the rational power of our political speech dies in a cesspool of our own dishonesty.



**3. Criminality:** We have the knowledge of what is best but disregard our knowledge and principles because we believe that we will be financially or otherwise advantaged by allowing lies and ongoing corruption to have their way. When we are playing the criminal card, we do not want to allow real knowledge and the country's foundational principles to influence politics because we have become thieves. When we allow lies and corruption because we believe that we will get what we want through corruption, we have committed an act that is criminal in nature.

In U.S. politics, millions of citizens defy their common sense on a massive scale to commonly permit grossly inferior behavior in our political talk that we would not otherwise permit in daily life. In the denial of our own common sense and knowledge, we have robbed ourselves of our own power and handed it over to wealthy forces who are only too glad to take it from us. We live in an Orwellian nightmare of our own creation, and only We The People have the power to fix it. It is now time that we stand up as responsible citizens of the republic and deploy the knowledge, reason, and honesty necessary to clean up the swamp that We The People have created. When we do not hold ourselves accountable to our own knowledge, reason, and honesty, then our choices and commitments are shaped in the absence of the influence of our own knowledge, values, and principles. *When this happens, we must ask ourselves a very blunt question.*

"How has this happened? Am I ignorant, a hypocrite, a criminal, or some combination of the three?"

**The only alternative to holding ourselves accountable to knowledge, reasoning, and honesty in political talk is to allow the poisoned fruit of our own corruption to kill our nation.**

Let's be honest. We screwed up. We screwed up badly. We now allow cartoonish, useless talk to take the place of responsible political discourse. It is not the corporate or wealthy powers that are oppressing us, even if they do play the thief and take advantage of our weaknesses. We are responsible for upholding our end of the bargain that belongs with being a citizen of a democratic republic. We have fallen down on the job and have allowed our reliance on knowledge, reason, and honesty in political talk to die. We must stand back up, take control of ourselves, and once again assert our full powers of reasoning.

In the following two sections, we will outline how the U.S. obsession with false claims of knowledge compares with one person's confessions of ignorance. Socrates' confessions of ignorance, which have been the cornerstone of western philosophy for thousands of years, lights up the path we must travel to reclaim the power that comes with restoring our reliance on knowledge, reason, and honesty in political talk.

## **False Claims of Knowledge in Orwellian Discourse**

If all of the workers in the arts, trades, and sciences lied as much about their knowledge as we allow for our political talk, modern civilization would have already collapsed. The most destructive bad habit of U.S. political talk, which underlies many of the Orwellian habits of talk discussed above, is the habit of lying to ourselves and to others about our knowledge. In political conversations, we regularly lie to ourselves and others in order to pretend that we are correct. We are in the habit of claiming to have definitive knowledge of political issues when the truth is that we have little to no idea of what we are talking about most of the time. We regularly lie to ourselves by thinking that memorizing a few slogans, memes, and talking points constitute sufficient knowledge of a political issue. We lie to ourselves in thinking that slinging memes and insults back and forth constitutes a political discussion. We lie to ourselves and others by claiming to know the thoughts and motivations of people who think differently because we are more interested in projecting a strawman onto them or attributing evil motivations to them than we are interested in listening to and learning from them. We falsely claim knowledge as we assign a label to the one that thinks differently instead of giving due diligence to the adult responsibility of extending the effort to interpret that person's ideas. We use labels on those who think differently under the false pretense of knowledge so that we can erase any real knowledge of other citizens by reducing them to as little as a single word in order to pass our judgments upon them in the absence of reasoning.

Unsubstantiated and false claims of knowledge abound in U.S. political talk. Nobody who is invested in the partisan game of Red Team vs. Blue Team wants to admit either ignorance or error in a political conversation. Partisan enthusiasts in the U.S. have been conditioned not to embrace the basic human need to verify knowledge in political talk. Simplistic back and forth claim and counterclaim bashing, where people just make endless assertions without ever admitting error, asking responsible questions, or examining their own claims, is the norm for U.S. political conversations. Instead of having useful knowledge-based conversations guided by many questions, the partisans are merely competing in a game where they want to score a quick win. Their political conversations do not serve the interest of effectively addressing the nation's problems through the exercise of our capacity to reason. The partisan enthusiast is only interested in racking up a few more political points for their team as if they were playing a game instead of having a real political conversation. And the win has to be quick because the one certain thing in U.S. political talk is that most of us are not interested in giving the time, patience, and work required for quality reasoning about a political issue. Instead of taking responsibility for being useful in our talk, we lie about our knowledge so that through the pretense of winning, we can abandon the tedious necessity of reasoning about political issues and move on with our day. In our false claims of knowledge we put a quick end to a political conversation and to the possibility of discovering new knowledge.

We are obsessed with oversimplifying issues and claiming to have definitive answers because we play at political talk exactly as if we are playing a team sport or a video game. We are only looking for a quick win, which has the real world effect of merely shutting the conversation down. The purpose of the quick win is to walk away from our responsibility to exercise our capacity to reason. Instead of the song of knowledgeable reasoning, we have the empty music of memes, marketing slogans, and party talking points repeating in our heads. False claims of knowledge flood the political sphere while we dance to the tunes composed by our corporate puppet masters as if somehow the well being of our lives depended on the avoidance of knowledge.

The plain truth is that unsubstantiated claims of knowledge dominate our Orwellian U.S. political talk. These claims are simplistically focused on the mindless repetition of the party talking points, slogans, and memes that have been handed to us by party leaders, media talking heads, and anonymous internet sources. Our political talk is filled with false claims of knowledge, which are made without offering any context, evidence, or rational argument. We are not publicly invited to examine political claims rationally. Instead, people simplistically bash each other with claims and counterclaims in the absence of effectively examining any of the claims. Attempts at reasoning responsibly about political claims are typically met with personal attacks, bigoted dismissals, and quick changes of topic, which instantly shut down the process of examining claims of knowledge. Because of the public acceptance of unsubstantiated claims of knowledge, we have allowed unvetted claims using single word labels, marketing slogans, memes, and short talking points to be the whole of political knowledge for millions of U.S. citizens.

False claims of knowledge are a tactic we use as we merely play a team sport and root for our political team no matter what the facts are saying. In this terrible habit, we have abandoned all responsibility. We have given up our reliance on knowledge, our respect for truth, our need for honesty, and our capacity to reason in exchange for pretending to win. In the political realm of false claims of knowledge, we do not have real debates or the rational examination of ideas. We merely seek to compete with one another to see who can sling out the best memes, marketing slogans, and insults in order to foster the delusion of winning. Unfortunately, unsubstantiated claims of knowledge and false winning make us all losers. This cheap obsession with vague and undefined notions of winning is the dominant reason why the people have abandoned knowledge, reason, and honesty in their journey to losing all real influence in the politics of the nation. When we recognize that the real human capacity to have any impact in this world only exists in our ability to reason about our knowledge, the Orwellian habits of U.S. political talk show themselves to be a highway to helplessness.

In Orwell's *1984*, O'Brien, who is speaking as a representative of the authority of the party to determine what is believed to be true, led Winston Smith to reveal the elaborate self-deception that is needed in order to believe any lie the government of Big Brother saw fit to speak,

"The law of gravity was nonsense. "If I wished," O'Brien had said, "I could float off this floor like a soap bubble." Winston worked it out. "If he thinks he floats off the floor, and if I simultaneously think I see him do it, then the thing happens." Suddenly, like a lump of submerged wreckage breaking the surface of water, the thought burst into his mind: "It doesn't really happen. We imagine it. It is hallucination." He pushed the thought under instantly. The fallacy was obvious. It presupposed that somewhere or other, outside oneself, there was a "real" world where "real" things happened. But how could there be such a world? What knowledge have we of anything, save through our own minds? All happenings are in the mind. Whatever happens in all minds, truly happens."[33]

Today in U.S. politics, there is no shortage of people willing to believe that up is down, a square is round, weakness is might, and wrong is right. No lie, no matter how stupendously obvious, is unacceptable to the dedicated partisan. In U.S. partisan politics, doublethink becomes patriotism. Hypocrisy becomes a service to the country. Greed becomes the new Constitution. In the destructive path of Orwellian political talk, the philosophy of "I do not care what is true. Just give me what I want." is all that is left of our values and principles. Are we really all that different in our habits of political speech from the society of Orwell's novel 1984, where slogans such as "War is Peace", "Freedom is Slavery", and "Ignorance is Strength" dominated their political landscape?

With the U.S. habits of Orwellian talk, blind party loyalty always roots for the team regardless of the dictates of our own knowledge. Party loyalty replaces loyalty to truth. Party loyalty, when it replaces our reliance on knowledge, reasoning, and honesty in political talk, is the cancer of U.S. politics. Just like the spectators at a sporting event, our laid-back consumer philosophy of "let the professionals handle it" leads us to focus on simplistic passive cheerleading support for parties and leaders. The consumer version of party loyalty ensures that we merely participate in politics like spectators who allow others to play the game for us.

In *1984*, Orwell described precisely the kind of leader that our passive consumer philosophy wants for its politics:

"Big Brother is infallible and all-powerful. Every success, every achievement, every victory, every scientific discovery, all knowledge, all wisdom, all happiness, all virtue, are held to issue directly from his leadership and inspiration."[34]

The perfect consumer leader is the one who, all alone, can fix everything. When we play the faithful consumer, we dearly want to surrender our will to allow others to do the work for us, do the thinking for us, and achieve for us. In the politics of the consumer mentality, all political reasoning and action is a service provided to consumers. Rejecting our own thinking is the subscription fee required in order to passively consume the political and ideological products that are offered to us. The good consumer passively absorbs and repeats the dogmatic marketing slogans, memes, and formulaic party talking points, which are created for them. In his essay "What is Enlightenment?", Immanuel Kant warned against the danger of the passive acceptance of ideas and formulas worked out for us by others who profited off of telling us how to

think. Kant described them as taking over the thinking of a population of citizens as if they were domesticated animals,

"Having first infatuated their domesticated animals, and carefully prevented the docile creatures from daring to take a single step without the leading-strings to which they are tied, they next show them the danger which threatens them if they try to walk unaided." [35]

For Kant, immaturity (not thinking for ourselves) and permanent dependence on those who profit off of our immaturity was the destiny of those who allow others to do the work of thinking for them,

"Thus it is difficult for each separate individual to work his way out of the immaturity which has become almost second nature to him. He has even grown fond of it and is really incapable for the time being of using his own understanding, because he was never allowed to make the attempt. *Dogmas and formulas, those mechanical instruments for rational use (or rather misuse) of his natural endowments, are the ball and chain of his permanent immaturity.*"  
[Italic mine] [36]

Our consumer philosophy of "let the professionals handle it" produces the diseased bondage of our own intellectual immaturity when applied to political thinking. The ball and chain of partisan dogma is the death of our freedom of speech and thought in politics. The result of allowing others to do the work of thinking for us has us left wide open to the Orwellian habit of passively and mindlessly repeating the dogmatic slogans and formulaic partisan talking points that are provided to us. When we merely repeat the dogmas and formulas created by others without reasoning, the expression of our freedom of speech becomes the bondage of our slavery. When we abandon our reliance on knowledge, reasoning, and honesty in political talk, we enslave ourselves to those who do the thinking for us. Kant wrote about the freedom that is most relevant to overthrowing the Orwellian in U.S. politics.

"For enlightenment of this kind, all that is needed is freedom. And the freedom in question is the most innocuous form of all—freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters." [37]

Real freedom requires real responsibility. However, the responsibility needed to do our own reasoning on social and political issues demands too much real freedom for our passive consumer inclinations. Our consumer philosophy leads us to the passive resignation that we prefer our politics to remain a spectator sport. When consumer philosophy reaches its toxic height, we bear a closer resemblance to domesticated animals than to thinking citizens who act on the basis of our own values, principles, and capacity to reason. At the height of our consumer inclinations, what is true gives way to what is easily repeatable. What is righteous gives way to what can be delivered to our door with a discount. The number one characteristic of the habits of the political talk of faithful consumers is passive resignation. Passively allowing others to determine what is

possible for us to think, allowing others to do the thinking for us, and passively allowing others to determine what is possible for us to say is true or false, is the sacred religion of passive resignation that our philosophy of consumerism brings to life in U.S. politics. In U.S. politics, the passive resignation of consumers is the most powerful basis for repeating false claims of knowledge because it assumes the abandonment of our own capacity to reason independently.

In 1984, as he speaks of his government's assertions about what is true, Winston Smith revealed the full extent of the intellectual breakdown that comes with the passive resignation that disregards our civic responsibility to think for ourselves,

"In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it. It was inevitable that they should make that claim sooner or later: the logic of their position demanded it. Not merely the validity of experience, but the very existence of external reality was tacitly denied by their philosophy. The heresy of heresies was common sense. And what was terrifying was not that they would kill you for thinking otherwise, but that they might be right. For, after all, how do we know that two and two make four? Or that the force of gravity works? Or that the past is unchangeable?"[38]

Is our faith in any of the many nonsensical and grossly oversimplified political claims, or our belief in any of the extraordinarily obvious lies, or our tolerance for irrational and irrelevant personal attacks any less bizarre than giving up our ability to know that two and two make four? The power of consumer passivity makes any particular fact or principle optional when we give up our ability to use our own reasoning in exchange for partisan belief. Lazy consumer obedience to a party leader wins out over our obligation to be free through the expression of our own independent thinking. Truth no longer matters when all the complex issues of the nation are replaced by the fake fight between the Red Team and the Blue Team. In partisan politics, winning is all that matters. We do not take responsibility for our freedom of speech. Our freedom to do our own reasoning takes a back seat to the consumer convenience of just repeating what we are told. The results are no less bizarre than believing a party representative can float off the floor like a soap bubble. With blind party loyalty, false claims of knowledge only serve our blind cheering for the team of our choice in their raw grab for power. Most tragically, we do not even know what winning really means. Abandoning knowledge, reason, and honesty in exchange for the false certainty of the blind believing that is based on partisan loyalty is how you hand over the nation to thieves. This is a definition of losing.

In 1984, Orwell described what happens to be the most widely assumed yet unspoken dictum in the Orwellian style of U.S. political talk,

"The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command."[39]

In the command to reject the evidence of our eyes and ears, which is powerfully present in the Orwellian habits of U.S. politics, citizens are taught to love the ball and chain of their partisan bondage over their civic responsibility to exercise their freedom to speak and reason. When our freedom to speak merely serves the love of our own bondage, our freedom of speech becomes a weapon of tyranny. Even those with no strong partisan affiliations are affected by the omnipresence of the U.S. Orwellian habit of making unsubstantiated claims of knowledge. However, those who are die-hard party fans are the most affected. There is no amount of lying, cheating, criminal activity, or betrayal of our fundamental principles that can discourage the dedicated fan of the party. The party fan "knows" their party is always correct. The party fan always believes any claim to knowledge that the party makes. The party fan does not need to examine claims of knowledge because they will faithfully repeat whatever they are told. There is no external reality that is able to discourage the party fan from believing what the party says. The party fan does not need to reason about the issues because they have already chosen their team. The party fan does not need to fully participate in real political conversations focused on the examination of ideas and the exercise of reason because the party fan is just a passive spectator cheering for their team regardless of the truth.

Accepting and making false claims of knowledge becomes the social norm when the responsible discussion of political issues is discarded in order to feed our obsession with the incompetent and broken ranting of partisan bickering. We have allowed our political talk to degenerate into empty, meaningless conflict. Obsessing over a salacious, sleazy partisan soap opera is no replacement for responsible reasoning about the issues. Embracing the titillation of winning for its own sake degenerates the productive use of knowledge, reason, and honesty in our political talk into a desperate exercise of dysfunctional and childish one-upmanship, where winning is more important than truth. Prioritizing the quick and satisfying rush of an entertaining, combative high over the real work of making a productive contribution through responsible reasoning and competent speech kills most of the value in political talk.

The habits of our political talk more closely resemble the enslaved habituation of an addiction than they resemble the prudent habits of responsible reasoning about important issues. Through the decadence of the instant gratification of the partisan lust to win, which always works to shut down productive conversations, pretending to know has become the primary defect of American politics in the United States. The abundance of false claims of knowledge, the lack of reasoning, and the destruction of honesty is killing us. False claims of knowledge always set us up for failure in our political conversations. False claims of knowledge are so abundant on so many levels that our political conversations operate in a thick haze of delusion. The primary defect that leads to false claims of knowledge is a defect in our habits of verifying knowledge. We quickly claim to know what we do not know in our rush to win. *We The People* of the United States are lost in a delusional haze, but we can find ourselves again.

## **Socrates' Ignorance as The Beginning of All Solutions**

Here we turn back to the idea that honesty is the foundation of all reform. As hideously screwed up and broken as our habits of political talk may seem to be, the solution is simple to understand. It is as plain as the noses on our faces. This simple solution does not rest in the hands of powerful people who control the systems of the world. This simple solution rests entirely in the hands of ordinary people who live in the world. *We The People* have the power to change how we talk politics. The wealthy oligarchs cannot stop us. The corporate news organizations cannot stop us. The political parties cannot stop us. Only We The People can stop ourselves. We can choose to trip over our own faces by allowing ourselves to continue to talk like immature babies who will not reason about the most important issues of the nation. Or we can choose to allow our common sense to lead the way to talk politics in a manner that reclaims our power to influence the nation. As with all of life, living the answers is more difficult than speaking the answers. Although it is true that this solution is easier said than done, it is incredibly significant that it is very, very easy to say. Everyone can understand this and everyone can do it!

The simple answer to correcting all of our broken habits of political talk is given to us in Plato's dialogues. The dialogues of Plato, which illustrate Socrates' habits of questioning and reasoning, have been a part of the foundation of reasoning in western civilization for thousands of years. The ancient Athens of Socrates' time had some of the same problems with the talk about governing individual and social life as we now have in politics. Stealing through subversion is not a modern invention. Persuading people in the absence of knowledge was not invented by corporate television or the political parties in the United States. In Socrates' Athens, the art of persuading people in the absence of knowledge was practiced by professionals known as "*Sophists*", who were portrayed in Plato as teachers and speakers who could get people to vote for or otherwise support the positions they were commissioned to represent. The sophists also taught their students the practice of persuading in the absence of knowledge. It is unclear how accurate Plato's representations of Athens' sophists are in the dialogues. It is clear that the idea of persuading people to support actions in the absence of proper knowledge was a recognized practice in the time of Socrates. False claims to knowledge existed in the social and political life of ancient Athens and were perceived by Plato as being harmful to the governance of a society.

**The basis of Socrates' unique contribution to Plato's great legacy is not a claim to possessing masterful knowledge of any of the answers for the big questions asked in the dialogues.** In sharp contrast to the Orwellian style of U.S. political talk's obsession with pretend knowledge, Socrates' unique value and contribution is his claim to ignorance. Socrates is famous for claiming to know nothing. Reading Diogenes Laërtius, a historian in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, one might get the impression that Socrates' claim of ignorance pertained to everything. In his work, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Laërtius wrote that Socrates "knew nothing except that he knew that very fact (i.e. that he knew nothing)". One of the most famous quotes misattributed to



Socrates is, "I know that I know nothing." To say that Socrates knew nothing at all is an exaggerated misstatement of the meaning of Socrates' confessions of ignorance. In Plato's *Apology*, we find a more precise meaning of Socrates' ignorance expressed in terms of Socrates' odd brand of wisdom. Socrates, who had a long term habit of trying to find wise people to talk to, said this of his only capacity for wisdom:

"I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know.

- *Apology*, (21d)

In Plato's dialogues, Socrates is presented as the absolute opposite of the bad habit of holding onto false knowledge and therefore allowing ignorance to go unrecognized. For example, when Socrates' contemporaries were absolutely sure that a particular action or law was just or in some way virtuous, Socrates would tell them that he did not know if this was true. He had a habit of explaining that he could not know if some particular thing was just, virtuous, or pious if he did not understand the nature of justice, virtue, or piety. He would proceed to ask others to provide a definition of important concepts. Socrates asks questions designed to get people to define important ideas such as the concept of justice. In the dialogues of Plato, people could not just assume they had a sufficient understanding of the most important ideas in human living. Claims of knowledge were always questioned. The questioning of Socrates is the primary difference in the dialogues of Plato vs. Orwellian U.S. political talk. Claims are almost never properly questioned in U.S. political talk. In Plato, when people answered a question such as "What is justice?" with their definition of justice, Socrates followed up with further questions that led them to examine their claim of knowledge instead of just allowing them to mindlessly repeat what they believed they already knew. The same style of questioning is also applied in Plato to claims of any knowledge about virtue, piety, courage, beauty, friendship, and goodness. Claims of knowledge were always questioned in Plato.

The most important characteristic of Plato's dialogues is the asking and answering of questions. The abundance of questions about people's ideas, which are examined in detail, is the starkest contrast between Plato and the Orwellian style of U.S. political talk. In U.S. politics, we do not ask many useful questions. We spend most of our time making many claims and counterclaims, and none of the claims are questioned or examined in detail. We boast about unverified knowledge without allowing any real questioning to have a proper place in our conversations. In the partisan style of Orwellian U.S. political talk, we do not examine our values, principles, knowledge, beliefs, and behavior. We just brag about always being right. Plato's dialogues show us Socrates expressing his daily habit of engaging in the rational examination of people's values, principles, ideas, knowledge, and behavior in order to improve himself and others. This daily habit is at the heart of what has become known as living an examined life. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates tells us that "the unexamined life is not worth living" (*Apology*, 38a). The unexamined life is a life where we abandon our reliance on

knowledge, reasoning, and honesty to ourselves and others as we discard the need to examine our values, goals, and principles in life. The unexamined life is not worth living. Translating Socrates' statement into the focus of this essay, we say that the Orwellian habits of U.S. political talk, which refuse to question and examine our values, goals, principles, and beliefs are not worth practicing.

This is not to say that we should never repeat what we already know. Repeating what we think we know in an automatic, mechanical manner is part of our instinct to thrive. However, in the complete absence of rationally examining what we think we know, we eventually run into serious problems sooner or later. If our knowledge is correct and appropriate for the context, the fast and mechanical repetition and application of knowledge is a powerful tool. If our knowledge is incorrect, or we are just plain ignorant, merely pretending to know and then acting upon our pretense of knowledge destroys the quality of our life and ruins our ability to optimally thrive. Plato warns us through Socrates that we need to realize that this instinctual habit for the mechanical repetition of what we think we know has severe limitations. When this kind of mindless repetition is always applied in our discussions of the personal, social and political issues, which pertain to our capacity to live and govern ourselves, the wellbeing of our thinking and behaving sickens and dies. Merely repeating what we learned in our youth, in an automatic and mechanical manner, about governing our individual and social life is the opposite of the examined life. When knowledge is false and we are unwilling or unable to admit ignorance, our thinking, choices, and actions all go wrong.

In Plato and in modern life, embracing and acting upon false claims to knowledge is the great highway to wrongdoing. Socrates' honest willingness to admit ignorance is the starting place for making things right. In political conversation, recognizing and admitting our ignorance is the beginning of all possibilities of responsible behavior when we want to make things better. Remember that it is always true that in order to make something better, one must be honest about the fact that something needs to be improved. The partisan party habit of always denying error and ignorance is the death of adult responsibility. Politics is not a game for children. The good news is that we know how to grow up.

We commonly agree with Socrates' understanding on the importance of recognizing our ignorance. We know from our practical experiences living our daily lives that there is no point in using knowledge when it is false. There is no sane person who keeps implementing the same false knowledge over and over after failure upon failure and thinks it will suddenly solve the problem. When knowledge is critical to solving a problem, we all know that we want to verify the truth of our knowledge. We want to know if we actually know or just incorrectly believe that something is true. We want to understand the relevant facts and principles needed to solve our problems. We never accept less than this in our daily practical life. Nobody consciously commits to making error after error forever so that they can hold onto false knowledge. We never cling to marketing slogans and keep pretending they mean anything when real problem solving has a priority. Nobody buys a house on the basis of an unverified claim. Nobody

believes that their car cannot be in need of repair just because the marketing slogans praising the car in the TV commercial sound so good.

Yet the vast majority of us continue to accept and repeat the marketing slogans and talking points of the political parties without having the same desire to determine what is true and false. We give blind approval to the sayings of the parties and leaders without giving priority to deciding what is real and what is a fantasy. We act without verified knowledge and give support to political parties, religious leaders, and a circus of talking heads regardless of what does or does not honor our values and principles. We do this because we have stopped thinking about our values and principles. We have stopped examining our values and principles because we claim to know more than we really know. Nobody keeps failing in the same way in practical life without eagerly desiring to use different knowledge or develop some better skills in order to try to succeed. Yet in U.S. politics, most of us just keep doing the same things over and over, expecting different results as if by magic, we will be proven not to be insane. In this denial of our own common sense, we have manifested an Orwellian nightmare of our own making.

We all know that in practical and technical things from tying our shoelaces to traveling to the moon, we benefit from the mastery of knowledge and skills that allows for efficient repetition. We learn to tie our shoelaces when we are young, and we can mindlessly repeat the act of tying our shoelaces. It works fine. Plato's great warning to us is that we cannot treat our understanding of the justice and virtue of human character, the beauty and goodness of life, the nature of the public good, the validity of our values and principles, or the necessities of governing a nation in the same manner as we tie our shoelaces. Social and political issues are more complex than tying shoelaces or replacing a light bulb. We cannot assume that our take on our values and principles, which we often learned when we were young, are correct and sufficient for the future. Social and political issues embody complexities that can easily defy our understanding and are also always changing. Therefore, we cannot just memorize what we learned in earlier years and then repeat, without thought, the dictates of an unreasoning pretense to knowledge. Persistent reliance on continued reasoning is required to ensure we are doing our best. Continuing reasoning is required to hold ourselves accountable to our own knowledge, values, goals, and principles. Unless you are prepared to believe you are already perfect, you better keep questioning and thinking.

In ancient Athens, it was Socrates' ability to recognize and admit his own ignorance, which is the foundation of Plato's great legacy in the history of western civilization's capacity to reason. In the United States, it is our own ability to recognize and admit ignorance that is the beginning of saving ourselves from the Orwellian pretense to knowledge that has destroyed our political talk. This ability to have the honesty necessary to both recognize and admit ignorance is the beginning of the most important political reform in the history of the United States. *The usefulness of dropping our false pretenses of knowledge in all political talk cannot be underestimated.* The most common posture of communication in the Orwellian U.S. style of partisan political talk is to say in essence, "I know everything, and you know nothing. I am always right, and you are always wrong." When all the issues of governing the nation have become a zero-

sum partisan game of Red Team vs. Blue Team, the pretense of knowledge is the ground upon which the partisan betrayal of the nation walks.

The beginning of the healing of our habits of political talk can be expressed with one statement and one question. They are a statement and question that need to become the most repeated sayings in U.S. politics. They are a statement and question that illustrate our most basic truth and our most basic need. The statement is an act of honesty where we refuse to claim to know what we do not know. The question is an invitation to others to share their understanding.

In essence, the most productively powerful act of political reform in U.S. politics says,

"I do not know the answers to everything.  
Will you please work with me to understand?"

This statement and question is the foundation of useful political dialogue, where people work in good faith as one team for the public good. This basic cooperation between citizens is absent on the political stages of the United States. Like Socrates, we need to be honest with ourselves and others whenever we recognize our knowledge is not up to par. This kind of honesty, where we confess what we do not know, constitutes a transformation of politics from a zero-sum Red vs. Blue game to a non-partisan team sport where every citizen is on the same team. We fail at politics, regardless of which team wins, when our political conversations are driven by false partisan claims of knowledge. To solve problems, we must admit what we do not know and have the patience and wisdom to participate in a great American tradition that has been murdered over the decades. That great American tradition is the free exchange of ideas. There will be no making America great if our quest for solutions does not include the restoration of our reliance on knowledge, reason, and honesty in political speech. In the absence of American knowledge, American reasoning, and American honesty, we cannot be great. The responsible exercise of our freedom of speech is how we can begin the most important political reform in the history of the United States.

When we stop pretending to know everything just because we want our team to win, we can begin to talk politics for real. When we stop pretending to know the motivations of the one who thinks differently, we can begin to have useful conversations with them and allow them to speak of their own motivations. When we stop pretending to know what we do not know, we have the freedom to ask the right questions and begin to open up our minds to the all-important task of reasoning with one another about important issues. This one act is fundamental to healing our nation. Recognizing and being honest about our own ignorance restores real knowledge and reasoning to their proper place in our political conversations. Pretending to know what we do not know is the key psychological attribute needed to manifest all that is Orwellian in U.S. political talk. Being skillful in recognizing when we are ignorant and being honest about our ignorance is the key to unleashing the power of real political talk among the people. Before we list the essential characteristics of the kind of genuinely useful political talk that is

desperately needed in the United States, we must consider in more detail the unique focus of Socrates' style of ignorance, which eludes most of us today.

### **Instrumental and Values Reasoning**

Nobody would tolerate the incoherent, unsubstantiated, fanciful claims that regularly come out of U.S. political talk if we were to hear such boasting in any other part of our daily living. Whether it is changing a light bulb, getting our car fixed, or solving a financial or medical problem, we have a much higher standard for holding ourselves accountable to knowledge in our talk about the practical arts, trades, and sciences in our daily living than we have for our talk about politics. In daily life, especially if it costs us money, we insist that claims should be proven. We reject blatant lying and the willful avoidance of talking about necessary subjects as vigorously as we reject sticking our own hands into a fire. We insist that people be provably knowledgeable and skillful so that we know they will do what we have hired them or otherwise trust them to do. Discerning the difference between knowledge and ignorance is a matter of common habit when solving problems in daily life. We gladly trust experts every day. We trust experts with our money, with the structural integrity of our homes and cars, with our health, and with our lives. In daily life, real knowledge and skill still have a good reputation. In daily life, the possession of knowledge and skill must be proven.

However, in politics we regularly allow unproven claims, boastful talk about false claims of knowledge, meaningless obsessions with irrelevant gossip, and an obnoxious insistence on being right that is nothing more than empty partisan bigotry. We let politicians get away with hideously poor talk that we would never allow from anyone else in our daily lives. We have allowed our standards for holding ourselves accountable to knowledge in politics to degenerate into senseless dysfunction because of a particular liability in the nature of political reasoning. Instrumental reasoning is employed when we have a clearly defined goal and must exercise our capacity to reason about the means to achieving that goal. Instrumental reasoning becomes defective in the absence of clearly understanding the end goal that is being served. Values reasoning occurs when we are defining and justifying our fundamental values, goals, and principles. The beginning of all political talk is grounded on our capacity to reason about our shared values, goals, and principles. Understanding the fundamental necessity of values reasoning in political talk will help us light up the path to political reform. The contrast between our properly functioning instrumental reasoning in the context of universally accepted goals and our defective instrumental reasoning in political talk, where there is no universal agreement on shared values, goals, and principles, defines a basic problem in all political talk. This problem is described in, "*The Accountability of Knowledge: Politics, Arts, Trades, and Sciences*" from our essay, "The Beauty of the Conservative Mind: Conservatism and The Examined Life",

"What is it about social and political issues that we allow politicians to offer only simplistic slogans when such issues are complex? We would never tolerate mere slogans from someone selling us a house if that person does not let us inspect the house in detail. Why do we allow politicians to get away with such behavior with their

policy positions? Almost everyone allows politicians to persistently avoid discussing the full details of the issues and their proposed solutions to problems...Our ability to apply knowledge and to be accountable to knowledge in the arts, trades, and sciences seems to be of a different order than that of politics. The primary reason for this is that the end goal of an art, trade, or science is clear. It is easier to hold people immediately accountable to their claims of knowledge when a goal is clearly defined. A carpenter makes things out of wood. Everyone agrees that producing things made of wood is clearly the end goal of all carpentry. But what is the end goal of a society? The object of the art of painting is to produce a painting. But what is the object of the art of living? The performance values in the arts, trades, and sciences can be measured with precision because the ends are defined with precision. But what is the definition of a life well lived and a nation well governed? What knowledge and skill is relevant to that?

When we are reasoning about the complexities of governing an individual human life or a society, things are less clear. The end goals of life are not defined with the same universal consensus as we enjoy with the practical goals of the specific arts, trades, and sciences that we employ in our daily living. The question of what proper values, principles, and end goals should be used to structure individual and social life lacks a universal consensus on the answer. All carpenters know when it is desired for two pieces of wood to be bound together and when they should be loosed from one another. All carpenters know the best methods for binding and loosening. When there is disagreement on such things, carpenters know how to resolve such disagreements in a technically efficient manner. But what should be bound and what should be let free in a society? There is no standardized agreement on social obligations and freedoms, and the exact knowledge needed for resolving disagreements is less than clear. We are more confident and hold ourselves to a higher standard in the arts, trades, and sciences because the ends have been decided through overwhelming consensus. When we are only required to employ instrumental reasoning to achieve the means to clearly defined ends, the accountability to knowledge is firmly within our grasp. But when we are required to reason about the fundamental values and end goals of life itself, we are not as confident about reaching a consensus."

*The Beauty of the Conservative Mind: Conservatism and The Examined Life*  
by Max Maxwell & Melete

When the end goals are clear, instrumental reasoning is easier. The lack of universally well-defined end goals is the primary issue that causes problems with our accountability to knowledge in political conversations. The confusion is most intense when we try to use instrumental reasoning to solve specific issues while we lack clarity and consensus on even our most basic values, principles, and end goals. The establishment of common ground with shared values, principles, and goals helps us define the nation's issues and work together to envision workable solutions. The lack of value-based clarity and consensus chokes the life out of our political talk. Like a carpenter, who does not know that the purpose of carpentry is to make things out of wood, we participate in political talk without a proper sense of shared purpose in our politics. The values, principles, and goals needed to define purpose in politics, to guide our thinking and choosing, are missing from our political talk. In the absence of the examination of our

own values, principles, and goals, how can we pretend to be serious about considering the Constitution's ambition to,

"form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity"[40]

The U.S. Constitution is dedicated to pursuing identified values and goals that We The People share in common. The Constitution is not about setting forth the rules for a zero-sum partisan game of Red Team vs. Blue Team that does not serve the good of the nation. We cannot claim fidelity to the Constitution if we refuse to give any thoughtful consideration to the basic values and principles, which define the meaning of the important goals listed in the preamble. When we subordinate the values, goals, and principles that are the foundation of our republic to a partisan game of Red Team vs. Blue Team, we have abandoned everything of value in political talk. When we skip the step of discussing and clarifying the fundamentals that we agree upon in order to work on more specific political issues, then we are merely pretending that we are knowledgeable about and agree upon all of the basic values, end goals, and principles necessary to start a conversation about the governance of the nation.

This common pretense of having the knowledge of shared values is false. It is false confidence in a false claim of knowledge when we pretend that we can work together to use instrumental reasoning in order to fulfill our values, live out our principles, and achieve our end goals, but we have not bothered to make any of these things a matter of knowledgeable agreement. By holding onto the obnoxious pretense of being infallible with regard to values, goals, and principles, we refuse to examine our own ideas. This refusal kills the possibility of having useful conversations about specific issues that can only be discussed among human beings working together on common ground about their shared values, goals, and principles. The great American tradition of the free exchange of ideas never takes place among infallible, omniscient beings who refuse to examine their own ideas and never admit ignorance or error.

Nobody discusses auto mechanics if they do not understand the end goal of auto mechanics is to build, maintain, and fix cars. Yet in politics, we delude ourselves into thinking that we can have a conversation about governing the most powerful nation in the history of humanity without understanding the purpose of politics. It is fundamentally necessary to reach some common ground and obtain some useful agreement upon basic values, end goals, and principles for our politics. Carpenters do not talk much about the fact that the purpose of carpentry is to make things out of wood. They know this already. However, in politics there is a lack of agreement on our defining end goals and fundamental operational values. We should be talking about our values, goals, and principles, but instead act as if there is already a consensus. What is the purpose of governing a nation? What is the meaning of living well? In politics we regularly discuss governing a nation as if it is assumed that everybody has a clear idea of what this means. Yet, as soon as differences emerge, it is obvious not only that we do not agree

but that we are not even clear about our own understanding of the basic values, goals, and principles needed to govern our nation.

Metalworkers do not discuss the need for metal in their work without determining exactly what this means. But people in political conversations regularly talk about the need for justice in politics in ways that clearly illustrate the lack of any universal consensus on the meaning of justice. Painters do not dwell on the question "What is paint?" and fail to find useful agreement amongst the world's painters. But ask those involved in political conversations, "What is justice?" or "What is virtue?" or "What is the public good?" and we find that an easy consensus can die a quick and clean death. The truth is that we are all deeply ignorant about our own values, goals, and principles. We owe ourselves and our fellow citizens a real conversation about it. The complete lack of productive conversation about values, principles, and end goals pertaining to the public good and the governance of the nation underlies everything that is seriously wrong with U.S. political talk.

Claims of fidelity to values, goals, and principles abound in Orwellian political talk, but a critical examination of our fundamental truths is anathema to the actual habits of the Orwellian style of U.S. political talk. This is why we cannot hold ourselves or our politicians accountable to knowledge in the governance of the nation. There can be no effective cooperative instrumental reasoning among citizens in the complete absence of clearly defining the values, end goals, and principles upon which we can all agree. The instant we shift our political conversation to a focus on values-based reasoning, the fragile posture of "Red Team vs. Blue Team" collapses. It is impossible to maintain the fake Red vs. Blue mode of political talk when the nature of this theatrical conflict never entertains the rigorous examination of values or principles. In an open and honest examination of values, goals, and principles, we are all on one team. The instant we commit our conversational efforts to find common ground in our agreements about shared values, end goals, and principles, the fake game of Red Team vs. Blue Team dies and political talk among the people becomes powerful.

A common habit arises when we recognize differences in our values or principles. When we realize we are not on common ground, we often embrace a false pretense of knowledge about the other's motivations. The most common response is to engage in a personal attack. If we discern a difference of values, goals, and principles in the other, the most common attack is an attack on the motives and character of the one who thinks differently. Attacking people's motives and character instead of discussing values, goals, and principles is a manifestation of two of the methods of avoiding knowledge that we discussed earlier. The two methods of Avoiding Knowledge Through Irrelevant Gossip and Avoiding Knowledge Through Bigotry have a powerful presence in political talk for those who refuse to openly discuss the fundamental foundations of their political views. It is useless to pretend to know another person's motives and character instead of rationally discussing our differences in values, principles, and end goals for life and the governance of a nation. It is useless because it is a failure to hold ourselves accountable to our own knowledge. It is a failure to reason about what is most important. When we assume the pretense that we cannot be wrong, then we become incapable of



useful conversation in politics where differences dominate the political landscape. In the dialogues of Plato, Socrates insists that we cannot work together to engage in instrumental reasoning in the complete absence of reasoning about our values, goals, and principles.

When we just assume that we have correct and irrefutable knowledge, it is natural for us to also assume that the one who thinks differently is corrupt or ignorant. When millions of U.S. citizens engage in political talk under the false, overburdened, and self-sabotaging pretense that they possess invincible and unquestionable correctness about their understanding of the basic values, goals, and principles of life, they are manifesting the bankrupt posture of *ignorance pretending to have knowledge*. As a result, all political conversation under the influence of the partisan pretense of perfect knowledge degenerates into gossip, bigotry, and distraction because the will to examine what is most important collapses under the weight of false posturing. I have never met anyone who had an absolutely correct and complete understanding of all the values, goals, and principles needed for living with perfect justice and virtue as we govern ourselves and our nation. If I ever meet a person of such perfect understanding, I imagine that they are not going to talk politics with their fellow citizens like a gossiping bigot, who is more interested in winning a fake partisan game than in raising our human awareness of the truth.

I have lost count of the number of times that I have talked with people who were sure about the justice of a particular partisan policy position yet could not answer basic questions about the meaning of justice. When you are absolutely sure of the perfection of your understanding of your values and principles but cannot answer basic questions about the nature of human virtue, morality, freedom, patriotism, or justice, it is reasonable to ask you to be open to the possibility that your understanding is not perfect and that you owe yourself and your fellow citizens a real conversation. Anyone, who persists in believing that they have some kind of perfect knowledge, should naturally welcome the opportunity to answer questions about their values and principles. Why would they not gladly submit to the most complete questioning? Wouldn't a person of perfect understanding naturally love to spread their understanding to others? The blunt truth is that those who pretend to always be correct in politics are not perfect. The pretense of infallibility is merely a game-playing posture in a zero-sum game of Red Team vs. Blue Team. The pretense to infallibility is an irresponsible disregard for the wellbeing of the nation and its people. Productive political conversation among people who think differently is not a game. It is necessary to the well-being of the nation's public good for us to be more honest about the incompleteness of our understanding.

There is no end to the unreasoning pontification on all that is just, patriotic, righteous, and good about specific laws, policy positions, actions, and parties when people have stopped thinking. In the absence of thinking about the nature of justice, virtue, and the basic values and principles required to live well, we grovel in the darkness of our own ignorance. When we falsely assume that we already know everything about our own values, we set ourselves up in the pretense of knowledge to fail to examine what we need to question the most. How can we reasonably determine the justice or injustice of

anything if we never give any time or work inquiring into and thinking about the nature of justice? How can our talk have integrity when we blindly refuse to examine our own understanding of our own values and principles when questioned?

In order to reform politics and bring power back to the political talk of the citizens of the United States, we must first find common ground on values, goals, and principles that we are willing to share in our politics. This means we must be open to listening to one another's questions, motivations, ideals, values, principles, and goals. We must exchange our ideas in a free and productive manner devoid of the false partisan pretense of perfect knowledge that is the faithful companion of partisan bigotry. We must cooperate together in the absence of the lust for a partisan win. Seeking common ground is the beginning of all productive political talk. We all know that simply having a lack of confidence about reaching a consensus on complex issues is no excuse to give up. Nobody argues that simpler issues should have a higher standard of accountability to knowledge and reason. We all know that more complex issues demand more effort in our reasoning in order to make progress. We all know that we should not allow ourselves to throw all knowledge-based, rational conversation into the garbage just because it may be challenging to find common ground in solving a problem. Political conversations, which require us to discuss our fundamental operating principles place a higher demand on us to recognize the necessity of the use of reason in addressing complex issues. This demand is placed when, due to the lack of consensus, we are required to rethink the basic values, end goals, and principles of living life and of governing a nation.

Actual reasoned judgments about values and principles are missing in action when the party fan gets excited about claiming values and principles in order to secure a win for the team. This kind of instrumental reasoning about how to secure the party victory is not even closely related to the instrumental reasoning needed to fulfill the values, goals, and principles necessary to govern a nation well. To make instrumental reasoning productive, we need to use genuine values-based reasoning to empower our political talk. Values-based talk in which we express our capacity to reason about our fundamental values, goals, and principles is the most neglected form of communication in U.S. politics. If we cannot have real conversations about values, goals, and principles we cannot talk politics with any of our own real human presence, creativity, or power.

### **The Power of Recognizing and Admitting Ignorance**

The recognition of our own ignorance empowers us with the ability to ask useful questions. This empowerment is obvious from our simple observations about daily life. We all know that one cannot debate with a doctor about a medical diagnosis without our own medical knowledge. Nobody debates with engineers about their trade without the knowledge of the subjects of engineering. When talking with an expert on any art, trade, or science, laypersons quickly reveal themselves as being ignorant of the subject relative to the expert. No layperson can talk with an expert in building construction, medicine, physics, or carpentry and can hide ignorance for long. It is a common experience to quickly come to accountability with our own ignorance in the practical arts,

trades, and sciences. Nobody pretends to have knowledge about practical things without getting called out on it when real solutions are due. When we quickly recognize that we are ignorant, and we know we must confess our ignorance, we are empowered to ask useful questions.

The asking of questions is not an insignificant power. The ability to question is the greatest power of humanity. The ability to ask questions is responsible for enabling us to leave the planet, see to the edge of the universe, bring life back from the edge of death, and create beautiful music. There is no greater power in need of activation in our political talk than the power to ask useful questions. The public accountability to questions is the pathway for all possible political reform. This accountability is not just for politicians. Our public accountability to the asking of questions is for every single one of us. Recognizing and confessing our ignorance allows us to activate our greatest power, which is the power to ask useful questions. The recognition and confession of our ignorance strengthen our ability to relate to one another in a useful way. Only omniscient beings do not need to talk politics because they know everything already. When we recognize and confess our ignorance, we are able to utilize the power of questions, which is the greatest force for creation that humanity has ever possessed.

Often, we find that we do not know how to hold a politician or another citizen accountable to the knowledge of economic structures, administrative functioning, relevant mathematics, the complexities of foreign relations policies, the management of health care systems, or any other political issue in which we lack the necessary depth of facts and understanding. The most important thing we can do is quickly recognize and admit that we are ignorant. Pretending to know that a particular policy position is right just because your party said so is the most damaging and disempowering thing we can do in a political conversation. Party loyalties by party fans work to kill the great power of asking questions. The awesome creativity of the human power to questions dies in the hands of those who pretend to know. Socrates' readiness to allow his own ignorance to take a public stand illustrates the path forward. When we refuse to play a fake game of Red Team vs. Blue Team, we can see that ignorance is not failure. The recognition and confession of ignorance is the threshold of creativity. The public confession of ignorance, as seen in the dialogues of Plato, is the cornerstone of the foundation of western philosophy and rationality. As soon as we confess our ignorance, we gain the tremendous power to use questions to help refashion the world. The Orwellian style avoids properly questioning things because asking questions forces people to think independently. The oligarchs want to keep us tamed and controlled like Immanuel Kant's domesticated animals from his essay, "What is Enlightenment?" As soon as we devote ourselves to asking questions, which requires recognizing our ignorance, we become a power in politics. Since acting on pretend knowledge is always a disaster, the recognition of ignorance stops us from moving forward in our conversations in harmful ways.

Just as nobody can build a large building based on false knowledge, nobody can conduct a genuinely useful political conversation based on false knowledge. No general contractor would ever dream of putting real money and work into building something on

the basis of false knowledge. Every contractor knows that fake knowledge never works to build anything. No U.S. citizen should ever consider conducting a political conversation where we accept boastful claims of knowledge that are given without context, evidence, valid argument, or the opportunity for questions. Hiding our ignorance never builds anything useful in a political conversation. When we are able to recognize and be honest about our own ignorance, we become able to bring real questions into politics. The real questions, which are based on our actual ignorance, drive and empower real political dialogue. Boastful pretending to know everything shuts the conversation down. The asking of many questions forces a conversation to be more thoughtful and productive. But when both sides merely pretend to know everything and simplistically bash each other over the head with unexamined claims and counterclaims, real political conversation dies. The Orwellian habits of U.S. political talk are deathly sick to the extent that they put us in the position of working hard in every political conversation just to keep our ignorance hidden from view. Hiding our ignorance when real knowledge is required always sets us up to fail.

The partisan habit of hiding our ignorance as we pretend to be correct in all things makes us look like pigeons playing chess. A chess-playing pigeon just knocks the pieces over, shits on the board, and struts around as if it won. This is the state of politics in the U.S.. We have knocked over what is most valuable, and our politics is covered in shit. The democratic practice of voting only has value when we hold ourselves accountable for knowledge and reasoning in our political conversations and voting choices. There is no way to do this if we pretend to know everything. Only in the context of recognizing our ignorance and then asking useful questions are we able to embrace our accountability to knowledge and reasoning. Pretend knowledge has absolutely no value to the functioning of our democratic republic. The common American habit of strutting around like boastful pretenders in our political talk is the deepest shame of U.S. politics. If we do not know that we are ignorant or must pretend to know, it is easy to plow forward with false beliefs and flounder in the absence of verifiable knowledge. Honest political dialogue, in which the asking and answering of questions flourish, is necessary to build a future worth living.

By abandoning the fake partisan game and all of the pretend knowledge that goes with it, we can use our mutual ignorance to join the same team and have real, creative, and powerful political conversations. The fake game of Red Team vs. Blue Team must die, and Team U.S.A. must be born. United we stand. Divided we fall. Partisan politics is treason politics, to the extent that the dedicated partisan must, by definition, put their party before the country. The truth is that our questions are more important to our dialogue on social and political issues than our fake partisan answers. When real knowledge is missing, asking questions is more useful than blind partisan claims about pretend knowledge. Asking good questions and following up with a dedication to finding answers is much of the work of politics. However, we will never get to ask the right questions if we keep blindly believing false things and just keep pretending to know everything. If we are always making political claims but always refusing to examine our claims, we are just lying to ourselves and facilitating the destruction of our politics.

When facing our own ignorance in the ordinary tasks of daily life, we recognize ignorance as an obstacle to successful living and eagerly seek to gain correct knowledge. But in politics, we regularly refuse to acknowledge our ignorance and dive into making wildly unsubstantiated claims without evidence or logically valid argument. The first move to reclaim our power in politics is to learn to admit our ignorance in a timely fashion. A person who never claims to know what they do not know is, like Socrates, a force of reckoning. Questions have much more power to advance a conversation than blind, unexamined counterclaims. Honesty about our own ignorance empowers us by enabling us to ask the questions that will advance our understanding. Honesty about our own ignorance allows us to avoid the disempowering trap of clinging to false knowledge. Honesty about our own ignorance destroys the influence of the Orwellian U.S. political talk that is strangling the life out of our nation. The second move to reclaim our power in politics is to realize that political conversations must involve our thinking and talking about the fundamental values, end goals, and principles of our individual lives and our nation. This presupposes that we are able to admit our ignorance about our values, goals, and principles. The most important questions in politics, which are also asked the least in the Orwellian style of U.S. politics, are questions about the nature of our values, goals, and principles. What is the nature of our freedom? How do we know if we are defending freedom or destroying it? What is justice? How do we know if we are supporting its constitutional establishment or not?

A basic lesson from Plato is that we cannot talk about the issues of governing a life or a nation without discussing our values, goals, and principles. I learned from Socrates that I must never pretend to know everything about justice, virtue, morality, patriotism, honor, godliness, faithfulness, or any other basic value or principle. I learned from Socrates that I am profoundly ignorant about what it means to live with perfect justice and virtue. Therefore, I must recognize my ignorance and learn in order to improve myself and the society in which I live. I learned from Socrates to see the great value and power of regularly asking questions. Just as we cannot talk about the art of sailing a boat without understanding the purpose of sailing, we cannot talk about guiding a nation without understanding the relevant values, goals, and principles associated with such governance. We must learn to talk about our values, goals, and principles as if we are not omniscient about them. We must realize that every one of us is affected by a significant measure of ignorance in our understanding of life's basic values, goals, and principles. Our ignorance empowers us to ask questions about what is most important in politics. Admitting ignorance about our fundamental values, goals, and principles unleashes the great power of useful questions, which will transform our political conversations and reform our politics. Admitting our ignorance brings serious power to our political talk.

### **Recognizing Our Ignorance of One Another is The Beginning of Real Political Talk**

We are not just ignorant of dry facts, complex structures, and abstract principles. We are also profoundly ignorant of one another. We all understand that getting to know someone is a natural and very important social reality associated with the process of

working together in our daily experience. Nobody expects optimal cooperative efforts from groups of people who work together extensively if those people choose to remain completely ignorant of one another. Even when we learn simple things about one another, it makes a difference. If you know your coworker is deaf in one ear, you take measures to compensate so your communication is successful. However, in politics, merely pretending to know another person is the dominant style of talking politics. The pretense of knowing another person is the ground upon which our self-obsessed partisan bigotries walk. Instead of pretending that we already know everything we need to know about another person because we want to beat them in a fake political game, we must realize the truth that we are profoundly ignorant about the people with whom we talk politics.

The greatest power in our political conversations is in the truth that we can learn about one another. "United we stand" has little substance if we base our standing together only upon our ignorance of one another. The importance of learning about one another is an almost unheard of reality in most U.S. political talk. Most of us are so obsessed with pushing an agenda, rushing to secure a Red or Blue Team win, or so busy seeing the other as Red or Blue instead of as a human being that we fail to listen to anyone who thinks differently. We fail to learn about that person. We fail to be fully hospitable and attentive to the presence of another human being who is sharing their mind with us. The personal essence of reforming our political talk is to learn how to have a little common sense hospitality for one another as we share the conversational space together. This is not a complex idea. Getting to know our fellow citizens is the most fundamentally necessary thing we need in order to have a real conversation. When we become honest about our ignorance of issues and people, we are empowered to engage in real talk.

Our ignorance of other people does not just affect our understanding of strangers. A painful irony in life is that we can be ignorant of and virtual strangers to those whom we should know best and who should know us best. The co-author of this essay, Melete, has been my best friend for 37 years. Almost all of the time we have spent together has been in philosophical conversation with one another. We know one another very well. We know each other's values, principles, ethics, logics, aesthetics, ontological assumptions, epistemological interests, and life goals better than some people know themselves. Yet, we do not allow ourselves to assume that we understand each other's meanings and motivations in any particular speech act. The meaning of the perspectives we share must always unfold in the interactive context of conversation and questions. For Melete and I, in order to fully understand one another, there must always be conversation and questions and answers and more conversation and more questions and more answers.

Giving our utmost attention to another human being requires work, especially if we already think we know them. When familiarity breeds contempt for the ones with whom we are most familiar, we find ourselves behaving as if we know everything about them. When we act as if we are thinking that we know everything we need to know about another person, we listen to them less, we are less curious about them, and we pay less

attention to them in conversation. Even when we think we are actively listening and paying our full attention to another person, we can be mistaken about the quality of our involvement. When Melete speaks with me, she regularly offers profound insight, inspiring many thoughts within my own mind. Sometimes I do not fully listen to her but merely hear her in the context of preparing what I will think and say. When this happens, preparing my own thoughts has precedence in my mind over being good at listening to her thoughts. She knows me well enough to instantly see when my mind is starting to go off in its own direction. Once, I was sitting with her at the kitchen table. My elbows were on the table, and my hands were folded together just below my face. I was staring into her eyes intently. By all external appearances and internal perceptions, I seemed to be listening well. Yet, she could see my mind wander just by the slightest change in my facial expression. As I intently stared deep into her eyes, thinking about my own thoughts, she gently grabbed my hands and pulled them toward her saying, "Max, please listen to me."

Melete and I have been friends who have known one another and abundantly shared our thoughts with one another for almost 40 years. It still takes work for me to listen to her and to understand her well. After the many years of our friendship, she still has the capacity to surprise me, to enlighten me, and to inspire me. But when I am negligent by not offering the hospitality of being a good listener, I destroy her capacity to surprise, enlighten, and inspire. I know full well that I am even more profoundly ignorant of the human beings that I have just met. When I speak to strangers about politics, I know I must be at least as attentive to them as I am to my best friend. In real political talk, I must open my heart and mind to the stranger before me as if they are my best friend so that I can allow them to surprise me, enlighten me, and inspire me. How completely bizarre it is to hear so many people pretend to know complete strangers. In the Orwellian style of U.S. political talk, we pretend to know the motivations, values, goals, and principles of those who think differently than we because we want to capture them in our labels and categories. We want to find an excuse not to listen to them. We pretend we know them as we turn them into strawmen, as we label them, diagnose them, and categorize them in the act of disregarding them. The Orwellian style of talk does not want to have a real political talk. The Orwellian style of political talk loves to pretend to know people. When we are playing the indentured servants to our Orwellian oligarchs, we merely want to win a fake political game of Red Team vs. Blue Team more than we want to know our neighbor.

The beginning of all real political talk involves the search for the common ground upon where we will stand together upon the common values, goals, and principles that we are willing to share. It is impossible to have any real political talk between citizens if those citizens have zero awareness of sharing anything in common. The common public good of all citizens is the ground upon which the governance of the nation walks. How can we assume we know the full depth of another person's take on their values, goals, and principles if we do not offer them the space they need to express themselves fully? Inviting another human being into a shared conversational space requires at least a touch of simple hospitality. Nobody wants to express the fullness of their understanding to me if they think I will only shove my partisan bigotry down their throats. The most

powerful political reform in the U.S. does not require an understanding of Marxist theory, neoliberal economics, or the nuances of multicultural perspective in foreign policy. The most powerful reform in U.S. politics requires that we offer the hospitality of simple human courtesy and common respect needed to make welcome the ideas of our neighbor in ordinary talk.

This kind of hospitality does not have any agenda except that of allowing another person to be the fullness of themselves in the space we share with them. Rejecting the fake Red Team vs. Blue Team partisan game of winning at all costs is a prerequisite for having an ordinary conversation with a fellow citizen. Joining team U.S.A. requires that we are honest about our ignorance of one another in order to work together and to listen to one another. Honestly recognizing the full depth of our ignorance of the person who joins us in conversation opens the door to greater respect and hospitality that is capable of improving our political talk's productivity. Over the decades of persistent thinking about social and political issues, I have learned that in order to listen and respond with the best that I can be, I must treat all strangers in conversation as if they are my best friend Melete. Henri Nouwen describes the working space that hospitality creates in order to productively see and hear one another.

"Hospitality...means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. It is not to lead our neighbor into a corner where there are no alternatives left, but to open a wide spectrum of options for choice and commitment. It is not an educated intimidation with good books, good stories and good works, but the liberation of fearful hearts so that words can find roots and bear ample fruit...The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and find themselves free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations."[41]

In Part II of "The Fundamentals of Education: Socratic Talk: Hospitality to The Stranger in Dialogue" we wrote:

"The freedom to create new and better understandings is not served by dominating or demonizing those who are most able to help us. It is the stranger with a different idea who is the most useful person to help us increase our knowledge and understanding. Hospitality is not just a convention of comfort or a style of social demeanor. It is the willful offer of the shared space needed to create. It is a gift of freedom. We offer this freedom to one another when we maintain the hospitable space needed to forge our differences into new knowledge."

The real payoff for ensuring hospitality in our political talk comes when we work together to examine the values, goals, and principles that we must agree to share if we are to govern the nation. It is not enough to give lip service about being faithful to values and principles. We must examine our values and principles together in conversation. It is not



enough to assume we have the same goals. We must clarify what we want to achieve together in dialogue. In real political talk, there is no Red Team and no Blue Team. There is only Team U.S.A.. Learning to invite one another to join together as members of the same team is a necessary step in healing our politics. The false claims of knowledge that come out of our partisan bigotry are a temple of lies. The refusal to recognize and admit our ignorance of one another is how we keep ourselves estranged from one another and in bondage to the arrogant pretense of knowing enough about our neighbor.

The largest problem in U.S. politics is not fake news. The largest problem is fake politics. Our politics is fake because our political talk has degenerated into Orwellian garbage. Real politics is about governing the nation. Real political talk examines our values, goals, principles, and one another as we discuss governing the nation. The Orwellian style of U.S. political talk is a plague of tyranny that kills our capacity to reason together in the common ground of our citizenship. This Orwellian tyranny has compromised our ability to learn about one another. Our dystopian arrogance of pretending to know one another has shut our eyes and closed our ears to our neighbors. The only way of immediately overthrowing the Orwellian nightmare we have created is to learn what it means to engage in real political talk. Learning to rely on knowledge, reasoning, and honesty, as we speak in good faith with our neighbors, is to learn to express real political power. We, The People of the United States, must learn to reclaim our ability to talk with one another.

### **Ignorance is Necessary to The Fullness of Our Freedom**

Regardless of external circumstances, there are ways of internally measuring the choosing, speaking, and thinking, which we associate with freedom. Even while being unjustly imprisoned and tortured, a person may still choose how to respond to such mistreatment. Even during torture by unjust powers, a person may still defy her captors by freely choosing to maintain her own beliefs, uphold her own ideas, and think her own thoughts. However, few to none of us would declare that a victim of unjust imprisonment and mistreatment by an authoritarian dictatorship experienced the fullness of freedom that is possible for human living. This style of measuring the fullness of freedom depends on assessing a person's external environment and circumstances. We can also measure the fullness of freedom with an assessment of our internal reality.

The internal process of reasoning itself can also tell us of the quality and quantity of our freedom. Recall Winston Smith's definition of freedom in Orwell's *1984*,

"Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."[42]

To the extent that we are reasoning actively with a capacity to honestly refer to the facts of our knowledge, we are free at least within our own minds. In this style of assessing freedom, external circumstances are irrelevant. In *1984*, Winston Smith is tortured by O'Brien. O'Brien pressures Smith to say that  $2+2=5$ , even though Smith starts off

knowing that this is wrong. If, under the pressure of torture, a person confesses that  $2+2=5$ , it is impossible from an external point of view to assess the status of his reasoning and, therefore, his freedom. However, in the novel *1984*, we have access to the internal process of Smith. Smith collapses under torture and becomes no longer able to refer to the fact of his knowledge that  $2+2=4$ . By Smith's definition, he no longer has a capacity for freedom. According to Orwell's telling, if Smith would have retained his ability to see that there were only four and not five fingers, while retaining his ability to tell the truth about what he knew, he would have retained his full capacity for freedom as measured internally. The ability to honestly refer to the facts of our knowledge is necessary for any capacity to reason. When we can honestly refer to knowledge and beliefs, we have both the capacity to reason and, because this empowers us to be able to choose, we have the capacity to be free. Freedom and our capacity for honest reasoning walk together hand in hand.

Consider the nature of our freedom of choice. Our freedom in choosing implies a process of reasoning. Choices requiring more thought than an instinctual response to stimuli always involve at least a moment of reasoning about the choice. Beyond the simplest, nearly instinctual choices, we cannot choose at all without a recognizable context of reasoning. When reasoning is absent, we cannot manifest the fullness of our freedom of choice. To the extent that freedom of choice requires reasoning, we may consider that measuring the presence of our reasoning also measures the depth of our freedom of choice. That, which works towards diminishing reasoning, also works towards diminishing our freedom of choice.

In every one of us, ignorance exists. We are more ignorant than knowledgeable. Proper reasoning requires that we recognize the presence of our ignorance. Ignorance is necessary in order to even experience the need for reasoning. In the absence of ignorance, no reasoning is necessary. If we already know everything, we have already arrived at the end of the journey. Neither choosing nor reasoning is needed when we are perfectly and absolutely omniscient. If we have to choose or reason in a particular moment, this is a sign that there is some measurable ignorance in that moment. The full measure of exercising our freedom requires the presence of active reasoning. Fully functioning reasoning requires the recognition of some level of human ignorance. So it is that the fullness of our freedom requires that we are able to recognize our own ignorance.

If we fail to recognize our own ignorance, this has a negative effect on the quality and quantity of our reasoning. It also adversely affects the quality and quantity of our freedom of choice. Choosing A over B for the first time, when we are ignorant of the best choice, requires us to analyze data, make comparisons, conduct evaluations, create premises, and form conclusions. The fullness of the process of choosing is at hand when we recognize ignorance. When choosing A over B for the one-millionth time, we no longer recognize that we are ignorant. In the one-millionth repetition of our past choice, we are now engaged in a very well-practiced habit, and the perception of our own ignorance has vanished. When we are not confronted with our own ignorance, we conduct ourselves with an unreasoning mechanical repetition that diminishes our full

freedom of choice because our rational process of choosing has been diminished or eliminated. When I recognize no ignorance at all, then there is no thinking, no evaluations, and no required questions when I know that I know that I know what I want to do or what is best. If what I think I know happens to be both right and sufficient for the present moment and present circumstances, then it works out ok. But we are not even close to always being right in this way, and this is where Plato says we get into trouble.

Unlike perfect, omniscient beings, we cannot guarantee that our knowledge is sufficient. When the perception of ignorance vanishes, we become imprisoned by the force of human presumptions that come with the unquestioned knowledge of our environment, values, goals, principles, and choices. We can lose a measure of our independent freedom of choice even when we are obeying, without thought, our own knowledge and preexisting preferences. The well-practiced repetition of past choices executed in the context of trusted knowledge diminishes the process and the experience of our freedom of choice. When we stop recognizing our ignorance, we stop rationally choosing and start mindlessly repeating our preexisting preferences like a programmed robot. Such well-rehearsed action is not a new choice. It is living off the echo of a past act of choosing. If living off the past and not making sure that our knowledge is sufficient for the present was always the correct thing to do then there would be no problem. If we never needed to rethink anything, we could repeat as much as we wanted without harm.

However, when our commitments to justice, virtue, freedom, patriotism, righteousness, godliness, or any esteemed good in life are so well-practiced that we stop reasoning, we start diminishing the reality of what we value. When we stop thinking about and stop questioning our understanding of our own values and principles, we can proceed to live for many years with diminished freedom of choice and sickly freedom of speech. Mindlessly repeating an unthinking commitment to the knowledge and choices that we embraced in the past condemns us to a lifetime of no longer choosing anything. When we are too content with the adequacy of our assumed knowledge, we condemn ourselves to experience the passing of years where we stop thinking, questioning, innovating, or being challenged. Unending repetition eliminates reasoned choosing and leaves us with no improvements, no growth, no striving to touch the high standards of our values, no fullness of freedom. When we refuse to recognize the possibility of our own ignorance, we lose the best portion of our freedom of choice, our freedom of speech, and our freedom of thought. Plato reminds us through Socrates that we are measurably ignorant of even our most trusted values, goals, and principles. Socrates' reminder to us about our lifelong and persistently measurable ignorance of things such as justice, courage, friendship, virtue, holiness, and temperance illustrates the truth that recognizing our ignorance empowers our capacity to question, reason, choose and live free. Whether we are mindlessly obeying an external dictator or mindlessly obeying the dictates of our own preferences, we lose freedom when we give up on expressing our capacity to question and reason. A more robust habit of reasoning deepens our freedom of choice and works to make good on our responsibilities for our freedom of speech.

Recognizing and admitting our ignorance, and thus remaining open to questions, is how we fully empower our ability to reason about life. Our freedom to choose, speak, and

think does us no good if we are busy pretending that we know everything. In the absence of ignorance, we have no need to question or reason. Whether it is choosing a private preference or making a choice with our vote, the health and fullness of our freedom of choice and speech depend on our ability to recognize and admit that we do not know everything and act accordingly. This recognition of our ignorance empowers our ability to reason about political subjects by keeping our minds open to useful questions and keeping our hearts clear of the pollution of partisan bigotry. The recognition of our ignorance helps us listen to one another. Socrates wanted us to remember the lifelong importance of refreshing ourselves with the recognition of our own ignorance about our own most cherished values and principles. The labor of freedom that comes with the recognition of our own ignorance is a safeguard to the democratic institutions and traditions of our constitutional republic. Plato's message about the value of recognizing ignorance is his greatest gift to western civilization. Socrates' witness to the value of ignorance lights up the path we need to travel in order to reform our political talk in the United States. In the concluding section that follows, we will layout point by point how to make our political talk powerful.

### **Preamble to Engaging the Power of Real Political Talk**

The Constitution of the United States both articulates and is also an expression of, the values, goals, and principles that the founding fathers envisioned for the nation. These shared values, goals, and principles are the foundation of politics for the United States of America. If you want a blazingly clear illustration of how irresponsible and incompetent we are in our political talk, consider the preamble of the constitution for a moment.

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America."

The primary goal of the Constitution of the United States, according to its preamble, is to form a more perfect union. However, upon listening to our politicians talk like a bunch of ignorant babies, you could be forgiven for thinking that the most fundamental goal of our constitutional republic is to put on a public display of childish irrationality. Instead of discussing the governance of the United States, which is the real topic of politics, we are regularly drowned in a deliberately, ridiculously irrelevant focus on nonsense. From a politician talking about vampires and werewolves as if they are real to a suspiciously passionate obsession on what some people (LGBT) are doing with their genitals, to attacking people in personal, simpleminded ways that are completely irrelevant to political talk, the way we talk politics makes the United States of America look like nothing more than a idiotic, crazy, dishonorable soap opera acted out by people who forgot to grow up and do not even know what politics is. This outcome is not an accident.

The vulgar corruption of our political talk is not difficult to understand. It can be plainly seen. Our own common sense tells us that nobody talks about the subject of carpentry

by discussing how corrupt a particular carpenter has been. We talk about carpentry by talking about how to make things out of wood. Nobody talks about farming by discussing what some farmers are doing with their genitals. We discuss farming by talking about how to produce crops. Nobody discusses automobile repair by talking about which mechanics are "true Americans". We discuss automobile repair by talking about how to fix cars. If your doctors started talking like politicians, refusing to discuss your medical care in detail and spent all of their time accusing each other of corruption, you would run for your life. We all know this is true. We all know that we do not accept this kind of fake talk in real life. But we have been trained, like performing circus animals, to accept and embrace it in American political talk. This is how the democratic institutions of our constitutional republic will die. When "We The People" stop holding ourselves accountable to the knowledge, reasoning and focus necessary to faithfully discuss our shared values, goals, principles, and the issues of constitutionally faithful governance, then we have abandoned our country to the wealthy tyrants who want to steal it all.

A portion of our public talking space is inhabited by people who do not even want to "form a more perfect union". These unpatriotic people speak of a "national divorce", breaking up the United States into different sovereign nations defined by red and blue states. Anti-American talk of willfully destroying the United States is not the subject of U.S. politics; it is the subject matter of treason.

In the preamble of the Constitution, the establishment of justice is the first thing mentioned to serve the formation of a "more perfect union". However, in our ridiculous U.S. partisan politics, you are far more likely to hear bizarre, foolish talk about Jewish space lasers or JFK Jr. rising from the dead than you are likely to hear rational, focused conversation and debate about the nature of the justice the constitution seeks to establish. *There is nothing in the dominant habits of our fake political talk that is faithful to the intentions of our Constitution as stated in the preamble.* Ensuring domestic tranquility is not served by ignorant talk agitating hateful animosity between citizens through a fake culture war based on ridiculously undefined categories such as conservative and liberal. The common defense is not served when citizens only talk of their differences by attacking each other personally in childish ways that are devoid of knowledge. The general welfare is not served by talk devoted to dementing the American mind with bizarre lies and mentally ill personal animosities. The blessings of liberty are never served by talk devoted to seducing the people to abandon their accountability to knowledge and the American civic responsibility of reasoning together about the issues of our nation.

Instead of holding ourselves accountable to the focus, knowledge, and reasoning that is necessary to think and talk about the nation's issues, increase our mutual understanding, and solve the nation's problems, we currently focus most of our political talk on what some people (LGBT) are doing with their genitals, or who is the biggest liar, the biggest hater, or who is the most unpatriotic. Attacking people personally with foolish soap-opera melodrama has replaced thoughtful conversation about the only

legitimate foundation of U.S. political talk. That necessary foundation is our shared values, goals, and principles such as those outlined in the preamble of the Constitution.

Conning people into giving up real political talk has taken away all of their political power and turned them into performing circus animals who only know how to repeat what they have seen repeated, can only focus on what they have seen celebrities focusing on, will only say and do what they have been led by the nose to say and do. Ironically, the people screaming the loudest about their freedom are the ones most likely to have abandoned that freedom in exchange for the chains of bondage formed by partisan insanity. They cannot think for themselves to the extent that they are obsessed with our fake partisan politics and its imaginary culture war. Real politics focuses on our shared values, goals, and principles that are necessary to govern the nation. Anything else is fake political talk serving a fake politics that is destroying our nation and leading us into tyranny.

In the guide to real talk below, we will cover what is necessary to ensure our political talk is faithful to our own knowledge and common sense. The six methods are:

1. Learn to Stay on Topic
2. Voluntarily Give Up Using All Partisan Talk: Stop using Six words (Republican, Democrat, Left, Right, Conservative, and Liberal)
3. Take Your Time
4. Examine and Question all Claims Made In Political Talk
5. Examine Your Own Values, goals, and principles
6. Work to Create Irrefutable Common Ground:  
This is The Foundation of a Nation
7. THE ENGINE THAT POWERS IT ALL:  
Become skillful at recognizing and admitting your own ignorance.

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### **A Guide to Engaging The Power of Real Political Talk**

We The People can think, speak, and reason for ourselves. We do not need the wealthy powers, the politicians, or popular celebrities to tell us what to focus on, or what to think and say. These seven methods below are the fastest and most effective way to take back our political power. Nobody has the power to start a business without thinking and talking about the relevant business practices. Nobody has the power to use the science of medicine to heal without ever thinking or talking about those sciences. We take back

our power not by reforming Washington, or K-Street, or the media. We take back our power by improving how We The People think and talk about social and political issues.

The seven items below are from simple perspective, primarily derived from Max's reading of Plato and his journey of living Socrates' ideal of the examined life for more than forty years. The methods in this guide are the indisputable foundation of our capacity to solve problems in daily life. This also includes political problems.

## 1. Learn to Stay on Topic

Real political talk is defined by its focus on the subject of politics. Learning what it means to talk about politics is not very different from simply learning what it means to talk about anything. The first principles are the same. This method is not complex. It is common sense. By the time we were halfway through childhood, we learned the importance of staying on topic. This first act of common sense in ordinary talk is the beginning of reclaiming the power of real political talk. Here is a simple illustration:

Question: How do you know if you are talking about carpentry?

Answer: If you are not talking about making stuff out of wood, you are not talking about carpentry!

The answer is correct because the subject of carpentry is making things out of wood. For every art, trade, and science we use in real life, we already know we have to focus on their real subjects to have a real talk about that art, trade or science. We all know this is the obvious truth. Nobody believes that they can claim to talk about trout fishing and then proceed to talk about bowling and not know something is very wrong. We all know the truth: politics must be included in this common sense principle of focus. We all know that there is no way to talk about politics without focusing on the subject of politics.

Therefore, the most basic question and the most important beginning in political reform in the United States is, "What is the subject of U.S. politics?". Any definition of politics must include the idea of making decisions in groups. This decision-making occurs in the context of governing something. That governance could be over a family, a business, a non-profit organization, a state or province, or a whole nation. The subject of U.S. politics is the governance of the constitutional republic of the United States. If we are not talking about the nation's governance, we are not talking about U.S. politics. Our political talk must focus on making decisions together about our shared values, goals, and principles as they relate to the governance of our nation. If we allow ourselves to be distracted and focus on other things, such as what this or that politician did with their dick last week or who is the biggest liar, then we are deluding ourselves with our enthusiastic and melodramatic embrace of fake political talk. ***There are no exceptions!***

We all know this is true. Nobody acts without a clear vision of values, goals, and principles and then still manages to get anything done. Fulfilling any willful purpose among a group of people requires shared values and goals. Only then is it possible to

work out the principles needed to reach our goals. When we make decisions together and act together, we must share a purpose (goal) or be prepared to fail.

Real political talk, and the power inherent to such talk, absolutely require us to focus on the legitimate subject of U.S. politics. When engaged in real political talk, we do not talk about a politician's use of their genitals, the defects of a politician's human character, or the fake fight between the Red team and the Blue team. We do not talk about which people are or are not patriotic (unless we are engaged in defining patriotism, which is a very different conversation). In real political talk, we focus on the issues about the nation's governance! In real political talk, we do not engage in partisan ranting about the personal human integrity or motivations of any particular political party or human group. In real political talk, we talk about our shared values, goals, principles, and claims of knowledge regarding how we should govern ourselves. Wielding the real power of political talk does not involve whining about other people and their supposed evil motivations or lack of character. We cannot manifest real power in our political talk if we are obsessed with insulting those who think differently, embracing partisan bigoted ranting, always changing the topic, indulging in off topic opinions, obsessed with childish personal animosities, and all the while rejecting our adult responsibility to take the time to think directly about the issues involved in governing the nation.

Nobody has the power to make things out of wood if they never consider or speak about the subject of carpentry. Doctors do not bring healing to our bodies if they never think about or speak of the subjects of the medical sciences. And where is the person who can make good things happen with regard to catching fish if they never think or speak about fishing? Likewise, we become powerful in politics only after we begin to focus and thoughtfully consider the subject of politics. Engaging this subject includes exercising our abilities to reason about the actual issues and the structures of problems. Engaging real political talk includes thinking and talking about the values, goals, and principles that should be influencing us in the governance of our nation. If you are talking about the economy or justice, stay focused! Don't let yourself be distracted by ad hominem arguments or childish partisan ranting. In order to get this done right now, we must have real conversations about political topics in the absence of any partisan references. In the absence of staying on topic, all the political power in the people's talk dies. The only way to restore power to the people is to restore their ability to engage in real talk.

## **2. Voluntarily Give Up Using All Partisan Talk**

This method is powerful! When talking about politics, we talk about issues. We do not discuss partisan conflict. Nobody thinks they can make a cabinet by talking and thinking about how corrupt some carpenters are. There are no shoemakers who make shoes by thinking and talking about how the feet of other shoemakers are dirty. Cabinets are made with the knowledge and skills that pertain to the art of carpentry. Shoes are made with the knowledge and skills of the art of shoemaking. Nobody deploys the knowledge and skills of carpentry and shoemaking without thinking about and talking about those subjects. This is true of every art, trade, and science we use in daily life. Everyone knows this. Real political talk does not trade the real subject of politics for personal



attack talk about individual people or groups. **The MOST POWERFUL way to quickly move towards a proper focus on real political talk is to never again say these six words in a political discussion:**

***"Republican, Democrat, conservative, liberal, right, or left"***

This includes also giving up all terms that are substitutes for our basic partisan vocabulary, such as woke, Nazi, socialism, or any other new term that becomes a partisan buzzword aimed at labeling and attacking people. Instead, talk directly about issues and principles without using party-approved labels, which have been designed to lobotomize you.

We can freely discuss all of the ideas that any particular political party, pundit, or your crazy uncle brings to the table. However, all productive talk focuses on the ideas without focusing on who came up with the ideas. This partisan language free talk stands in sharp contrast with the U.S. habit of immediately collapsing into an argument about WHO's idea it is and if they are a good or bad person/group. This conversation tactic will automatically and immediately force us to increase the quality of our focus on the actual subject of U.S. politics. Again, STAY FOCUSED! The nature of your commitment to the values, goals, and principles we share in the Constitution of the United States does not require mentioning these partisan words — EVER! If everyone stopped using these partisan words in all political talk, it would be in and of itself the most powerful reform of U.S. politics in the history of the United States. We can more effectively discuss the values, goals, principles, and ideas of U.S. politics when we never again mention the Republicans, Democrats, conservatives, liberals, the left, or the right.

Voluntarily banning partisan labels in all political talk creates the clarity that comes when we instantly prove who is and who is not willing to have a real conversation about politics. If someone only wants to talk about the fake Red Team vs. Blue Team game, you know they do not want to talk real politics. If someone wants to spend their energy focusing on the defects and personal perversions of politicians, or on cartoonish descriptions of the evils of conservatism or liberalism, instead of rationally examining the values, goals, and principles needed to guide the governance of the nation, then you know that they simply do not want to engage in real talk about politics!

If you are talking with someone who will not give up the six words then,

**STOP THE CONVERSATION!**

This is powerful! When you choose to talk politics then you must insist on staying focused on the governance of the nation and on the values, goals, and principles that must guide such governance. We can very effectively enforce the priority of real political talk by refusing to participate in conversations focused only on partisan ranting. We clean up and empower our political talk when we insist on not using the six partisan words.

All by itself, this technique is a powerful reform of politics. Let us give up all partisan words and references in all our political talk. Then we will empower ourselves to walk away from most of the Orwellian perversion of political talk described in this essay. Eliminating all partisan talk restores much of the people's ability to express their capacity to reason together about politics. Partisan politics is treason politics to the extent that partisans, by definition, must put their party before the country. Voluntarily banning all partisan talk automatically makes our political talk more patriotic! Patriotism is one of the most abused concepts in American political talk (along with the six partisan words). Patriotism is defined in terms of one's love of their country. Patriotism is most often used to reinforce partisan loyalty, but not to articulate anything about love of country in a meaningful manner. Two people can have the same love of country but disagree on what is good for the country. Neither of the two are more or less patriotic merely based on those differences.

The common, daily truth is that nobody loves anything if they never think of or speak of it. How can we love our country if we never think or speak about its proper governance? Our dual-party, partisan political talk resembles the talk of a pair of drunk, alcoholic parents too busy fighting with each other to properly think about or speak about their own child. Even though it may be true that the drunk parents love their child in some deep down hidden way, these parents do not love their child in the midst of their alcohol-fueled fighting. Likewise, we do not love our country in the midst of our partisan-fueled fighting. When all of America is drunk with partisan dishonor, real patriotism dies to the sound of our praise of it. When we give up all partisan talk, the effect of making our political talk more patriotic is immediate and profound. Real love of country requires a correct focus, a depth of thoughtfulness so that our real talk will serve the good of what we love. We can effectively work to restore the integrity and power of the American people by voluntarily banning partisan talk in all political conversations.

Yes, at some point, you can and must talk about who you want to vote for and why they are qualified for the job, but talking about their personal qualifications is not a political discussion of the issues. Talking about candidates opens up the possibility of talking about issues. If I want to vote for X because X favors such and such a policy, that gives us the opportunity to talk about that policy. However, we do not do that in the United States. Americans are much more likely to talk, like undeveloped babies, about the candidates' relationship to their genitals than to talk about real issues of governance. Remember that a human resource issue (described in "[Avoiding Knowledge Through Irrelevant Gossip](#)") is not a political issue. Discussing if a particular candidate is honest, or hates, or has a good work ethic is not a political conversation about governing the nation. It is a job interview. Talking about who should have a job in politics is a human resource issue secondary to the topic of politics. The blunt and dark truth is that a citizen who thinks the only political talk they can have must be focused on the personal integrity of who they vote for is a citizen who does not know how to talk about politics at all.

### **3. Take.Your.Time.**

Real political talk does not provide the solution to all problems in the time it takes to pick up a happy meal from McDonald's. It does not satisfactorily answer all questions in the few minutes between commercial breaks. It is not easy. This is why our current forms of political talk, primarily expressed in the time between commercial breaks in traditional media or in a Tweet or meme, are insufficient and merely serve the purpose of tyranny to limit and stop the people from engaging in real political talk.

Basic political questions remain definitively unanswered by our various civilizations over the course of millennia. You are not going to do it by yourself over a beer or two with the guy sitting next to you at the bar. Playing passive spectator sports games with politics, where we want to score a point for the Red or Blue team is always done in a hurry. **DROP THE IDEA OF WINNING!!** Scoring a rhetorical win for the Red or Blue team is not a genuine goal of real political talk. Know that for most all political talk you are just opening up a conversation that may have no real end in sight. Verifying a real fact takes more time than passing on an ill-considered opinion. Asking and answering real questions about issues takes more time than passing on a meme. Discerning what the Constitution means by establishing justice is much more difficult than personally insulting a conservative or liberal. Inquiring into the long term implications of passing an economically focused bill into law is much more difficult than sniffing your neighbor's crotch to make sure their gender meets your standards.

Real political talk has higher standards of performance and takes more time. Being in a rush, feeling like you have to score an instant win or solve the whole issue immediately, never serves the quality or purpose of real political talk. Slow down. Give yourself and your conversation partners enough time to express yourselves completely. Do not interrupt each other in the rush to score the tastiest viral soundbite. Taking your time is served by dropping all partisan talk, which has been engineered to be quick and empty. Taking your time is served by dropping all ad hominem argument (personal attack talk). Insulting people is naturally quick, easy, and irrelevant to real political talk. Instead, fill up your political talk with a correct focus on the values, goals, and principles needed to govern well. And, very importantly, fill up your political talk with the good questions about real issues required to examine the politics of the nation competently. Good questions and answers take time. **TAKE.YOUR.TIME.**

### **4. Examine and Question all Claims Made In Political Talk**

The real power of intelligent, rational conversation on any topic is in the mutual examination of all claims. Sciences do not advance because scientists accept claims without testing those claims. Good business is not conducted because business leaders blindly accept the claims of others without examining, questioning, and testing those claims. Real and powerful political talk does not just rest content with making unsubstantiated claims like a lazy consumer spectator cheering for the team. The easiest and most irresponsible thing in the world to do, which is typical of American political talk, is to make an unsubstantiated claim and consider the conversation to be

over. Almost everything that is said in U.S. politics makes some kind of a claim. We make a claim when we say that a certain policy position is valid and necessary. We make a claim when we say that freedom or justice is important. Our current corporate and party-approved Orwellian political talk model never examines claims at all. The U.S. model of Orwellian talk only engages in simplistic "claim bashing", where people hit each other with claims and counterclaims that they never bother to question or examine properly. A typical partisan claim-bashing conversation runs like this:

**Citizen 1:** I believe that policy position 'A' should be made law.

**Citizen 2:** No, policy position 'A' should not be made law.

**Citizen 1:** Yes, 'A'!

**Citizen 2:** No to 'A'!

**Citizen 1:** You refuse to support 'A' because you are a Libtard Communist who wants to overthrow democracy!

**Citizen 2:** You want to support 'A' because you are a fascist Nazi who wants to overthrow democracy!

**Citizen 1:** You are not patriotic!

**Citizen 2:** NO! YOU are not patriotic!

**Citizen 1 & 2:** {throws punches}

**That Evening on YouTube:** "Two Crazy People Fight in Walmart!"

This is politics in the United States. The short talk above is a very typical pattern even if that pattern does not usually result in actual punches. This pattern of childish argument is the American corporate and party ideal of political perfection. Claims are exchanged in partisan conflict but none of the claims are ever questioned or examined by either side. Nobody deigns to hold themselves accountable to knowledge, reasoning, and honesty when they are busy rooting for the team. In the U.S. dystopian style of fake political talk, partisan animosity completely replaces the cooperative exercise of our capacity to reason. Even when the pattern stops short of a physical fight, an attitude of petty personal conflict dominates everything such that the capacity to reason together effectively is destroyed. Instead of expressing a capacity to reason about claims, the two citizens in the above example resorted to a very common habit of American political talk whenever differences in perspective are detected.

That widespread American habit of political talk is to pretend to know each other's motivations and accuse each other of bad character. Partisan and subjectively personal conflict, which serves to shutdown rational conversation, is the fully intended result of claim bashing. That this style of inferior conversation is always repeated over and over and over in the corporate media is not an accident. It is a tactic deliberately deployed to destroy the people's powerful ability to reason together. Pretending to know things is the primary defect of U.S. politics. (see False Claims of Knowledge in Orwellian Discourse) The instant a difference of political perspective is noticed, the corporately sponsored Orwellian style of political talk is designed to invoke a Pavlovian response in the people. The goal is to get the people to immediately drop any focus on real issues and resort to presuming to know the other's motivations and character as they attack one another personally (ad hominem argument). The disastrous result is that the conversation is

now about two people involved in the conversation, or their representatives or parties, and not at all about the policy positions needed to govern a nation.

Citizens, who express real power in real political talk, commit themselves to examine all political claims with an abundance of questions and answers. We all know this is as it should be. To question everything relevant to successfully managing affairs is a normal part of daily life. Nobody talks in business or science as we talk in politics. Nobody, with even a grain of sense, tolerates the abandonment of reason while managing the ordinary affairs of life. It is simple. We must hold our talk about the governance of our nation to at least the same standards we uphold for our talk about changing a light bulb or fixing a car. Nobody accepts the irrelevant personal attack talk on those subjects. We should not accept the partisan distractions of personally attacking people in a way that is irrelevant to our political talk. We know how to effectively focus on talking about mowing the grass or making a wooden cabinet. We must do the same for our political talk. Real political talk is just like ordinary daily talk about normal things. Our daily talk about the necessary tasks of our daily lives, when that talk is effective, examines all claims in order to figure out what to do. Our most dominant habits of political talk defy our common sense and lead us to deny our own knowledge, and this refutation of the people's common sense and knowledge is the essence of the Orwellian in U.S. dystopian politics.

This tactic of simply dropping ALL partisan talk in our political conversations is a powerful way to change all of this. Replace all partisan talk with talk about values, goals, and principles as they relate to governance. Replace all empty claim-making with the productive examination of all claims. An adult citizen of our democratic republic is not just a servile robot that mindlessly repeats what it is told. Politically powerful citizens reason about political issues. In order to engage in the genuine thought and power of real political talk, we must engage the habit of examining ALL of the claims made in a political discussion. Nobody accepts the claim that a building contractor is going to make your house great again without giving due diligence to examining exactly what is meant by that claim and how it is true. Nobody accepts the claim that a particular product or service will free you in some way without trying to understand the nature of the freedom that the claim implies. No responsible adult ever puts good money down on unsubstantiated claims in their ordinary daily lives without questioning everything in order to understand fully. Politically powerful citizens do not embrace the Orwellian habit of always simplistically bashing each other over the head in political conversations with claims and counterclaims that are never, ever examined at all. The habit of examining all claims lights up our political talk with the full power of our intelligence and our capacity to reason effectively. *Our nationwide refusal to question and examine claims publically constitutes the death of real American political talk and the death of every aspect of democracy within our constitutional republic.*

## **5. Examine your own Values, Goals, and Principles**

Powerful political talk does not just examine claims about the facts of issues and our inferences related to the facts. Realize that every political claim embodies hidden

normative claims. Exposing the normative claims inherent to political statements is necessary for our full understanding. Nobody hears the claim that a car must be well-maintained without knowing this implies some kind of activity. The qualification "well-maintained" implies that some actions will be right and some will be wrong with regard to this car maintenance. Claiming to value well-maintained cars without ever considering the demands that this claim makes on our behavior is an irresponsible error. The same is true about a claim that the United States must be well-governed, just, and free. Such a claim implies that some actions will be right and some will be wrong. In order to determine the status of our plans of action, we must examine them in the light of questioning our values, goals, and principles.

For example, the establishment of justice is listed in the preamble as one of the fundamental purposes of the Constitution of the United States. There are normative claims embodied in this goal. Justice does not happen by magic. This means that there are things we must do to establish justice, to keep justice alive and well, and personally be a just human being. The very idea of establishing and maintaining justice uses verbs that imply human behaviors. When justice is claimed as being necessary to the nation's governance, this means there are human behaviors that are also necessary. It is very significant that there is no absolute universal consensus on the definition and meaning of justice. This means that two people can use the word justice in a sentence and mean very different things. Therefore, claims about justice have no value if we never question those claims. A claim about justice has no legitimate future if we never thoughtfully consider its demand on our behavior. Examining our values, goals, and principles along with questioning our human character and behavior is the necessary foundation of powerful political talk.

When we use references to basic values and principles in order to justify a claim, we are merely stacking another claim on top of the previous claim. This must also be questioned. We cannot just say "This policy is should become law because it secures our freedom!". We cannot merely say, "That economic policy is wrong because it is unjust!" Using a value, principle, or goal to justify a claim that is intended to serve that value, principle, or goal implies that we have some shared understanding of what those things mean. This means that claims, which justify themselves using the ideals of justice and freedom (for example) have no meaning if we refuse to examine those claims and clarify our diverse understandings of justice and freedom. "What is justice?" and "What is freedom?" are questions that need to be considered in order even to know if we are all talking about the same things. Unfortunately, in U.S. political talk, we instantly degenerate into fighting babies the second we notice any difference of perspective. The necessary truth is that if (for example) we make a claim about justice or claim that something is just or unjust, then we must ask questions of that claim. What is the nature of this justice that we seek to establish? How can I recognize this justice when I see it? What must we do to maintain and protect the constitutional establishment of justice in the United States? What does justice tell us about right and wrong? Are our behaviors living up to our ideal of justice? It is never enough to simplistically boast that a policy position is correct because of justice! Questions about our claims and the values, goals, and principles that underlie our claims must saturate our political talk. Real and powerful

political talk is filled with questions and answers, and more questions and more answers. Typical fake U.S. political talk is filled with unsubstantiated claims, childish insults, bigoted refusals to listen, personal animosity, and a fatal inability to focus on the real subject of politics. We must learn to get real in our political talk or learn to die as a nation.

We take it for granted that we share an understanding of our values and principles when we sling them out into a conversation without questions. However, is the neighbor I am talking with sharing the exact same understanding of justice, freedom, patriotism, beauty, goodness, and living well that I embrace? Or are the same words we use over and over in our political talk just an illusion of reference that really mean wildly different things to different people? The only way to find out is to join together with our fellow citizens in real political talk, which eagerly questions and examines our basic values, goals, and principles. Like refusing to use the six partisan words, Republican, Democrat, conservative, liberal, right, and left, we must refuse to make or accept claims without questioning the claims of others and answering questions about our own claims. When we express the adult responsibility to question all of the claims in our political talk we will find that our political talk has become focused and powerful.

We cannot afford to make claims that are important to the governance of our nation and then just leave all claims unexamined. The only being that can afford not to question its own claims is an omniscient being (an all-knowing being). We are not omniscient and must stop pretending to know everything through our habit of not questioning our claims. We must rigorously, relentlessly, with vigor and enthusiastic passion, question all claims made in political talk. Do not get passionate about the political party you have embraced as your home team. Such team-oriented passion is simplistic, useless, tribal nonsense. Do not be Red or Blue. Be Red, White, and Blue. Be American. Get passionately serious enough about your values, goals, and principles to question them thoroughly. Publically promoting a claim, while having no fear about answering questions about that claim, is the way of powerful political talk. Mindlessly repeating, like a servile robot, the values, principles, goals, and claims of our political parties is how to be a good Nazi. Questioning every value, principle, goal, and claim made by our political parties and our fellow citizens is how to be a good citizen of a healthy democratic republic where "We The People" are actually in charge. Mindless repetition is the lobotomy of U.S. political talk and the pathway to the rise of great evil. Relentless and enthusiastic questioning is the genius of the American people to keep their democratic republic just and free. The habit of questioning political claims and answering questions about your claims will give us extraordinary power in our political talk. All human power exists only to the extent that we can question and reason. A person that cannot question or reason at all is a person that cannot survive except as a fully dependent child, and this is exactly what the wealthy powers in the U.S. want for all citizens to be fully dependent children (slaves).

There are always more questions than claims. Each claim can generate many questions. If you claim that a certain policy fixes a problem then there are necessary questions. How does it fix the problem? Why is this a problem that needs fixed? On the basis of

what values and principles do we see this solution as being valid? What are the long-term implications of implementing this solution? These kinds of questions, which saturate real political talk, are vastly more important to the country than discussing which politician abuses their genitals the most, who hates the most, or who lies the most. We must stop avoiding the real questions that are inherent to real political talk. We, herefore, must voluntarily reject all personal and partisan melodrama in favor of a relentless enthusiasm to question and examine our claims, values, principles, goals, ideas, and behavior. The fake partisan political talk that dominates America must die in order for the republic to live.

## **6. Work to Create Irrefutable Common Ground: This is The Foundation of a Nation**

The first principle of intelligent and useful political talk is to seek common ground on shared values, goals, and principles. Once people work out the common ground they are willing to share, it becomes possible to engage in real political talk. Once a group of people share common ground, it becomes possible to form group identities. No nation exists without some form of common ground shared among at least some portion of its members.

No nation can exist in the absence of sharing common ground on values, goals, and principles. For example, if one person values justice and freedom as the foundation of society but another person cares nothing for justice or the freedom of the people, those two persons are divided in a way that might not be overcome. And if two people value freedom but have different ideas of the nature of freedom, those differences must be examined in order to work towards the common ground with regard to sharing the value of freedom in social and political life. Sharing a common ground built out of our mutual understanding of our shared values, goals, and principles is the foundational prerequisite for a real political conversation between two citizens of the same republic. Without this foundation of common ground, there is no defined public good, nothing to share, and nothing to talk about in politics. In the absence of this foundation of common ground, a nation cannot exist and there is nothing to share but an animal instinct for war.

Fortunately, the citizens of the United States have an amazing resource to help us get started on the search for common ground. We share in common a constitution that defines our republic. It is good news that this constitution is a short read. It is even better news that its preamble is a brilliant opening that gives us goals, values, and principles to embrace in conversation as things that we need to share. The preamble of the Constitution reads as follows:

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

What does this passage mean to us? What is the nature of the goals in the preamble of the U.S. Constitution? What are the associated values and principles needed to realize



those goals? You never hear an in-depth conversation about the nature of Justice, the meaning of the general Welfare (public good), or the human character of our republic's necessary Tranquility on the corporate news shows. Examining our values, goals, and principles so that they can have a say in the governance of the nation is hated by the corporate news media and the political parties. They prefer that the citizens of the United States abandon their capacity to reason in exchange for mindlessly repeating what they are told to think and say by their favorite news channel, leader, celebrity, etc..

Throughout the process of establishing common ground, the goal is to test every claim through an abundance of questions. In real political talk we work to refute all that is refutable by being persistent at pursuing the answers to questions and not dropping the topic at the slightest partisan distraction. This style of refutation is not oriented around either trying to refute all liberal or trying to refute all conservative claims exclusively in order to win a fake game of Red team vs. Blue team. When we engage in this kind of partisan fakery, we are living more like trained circus animals than as full and powerful citizens of a democratic republic. Effectively focused and powerful political talk seeks to question and refute all refutable claims, no matter who makes those claims.

In Plato, Socrates' goal was to first ensure that we know what we do not know. This requires us to deliberately try to break every claim, no matter what party or person makes it. Testing ideas to see if they stand is the life blood of intelligent and useful political conversation. For years, Max has had the experience of allowing the other people in the conversation to be the ones who have the wisdom and can teach. Asking questions with the motive to understand the people with whom you are speaking is very different from asking questions designed to dismiss the other person's views. Socrates did not try to prove people wrong. He wanted to prove them right; the only way to do this was to test ideas and claims.

The most powerful way to destroy an idea is to give our best efforts to make it stand up. We can and must assist one another in establishing our ideas through rigorous questioning without worrying about winning or losing a fake game of Red team vs. Blue team. It is the only way to have an intelligent political conversation. Unfortunately, our perverted obsession with partisan talk is the lobotomy of American politics. Every auxiliary reference to Republicans and Democrats, every framing of issues in terms of conservative or liberal, every mention of left and right, dumbs down our political talk like a lobotomy done with a white hot knife. In order to protect the common good and save our democracy, we must revive the art of political talk among the people such that we honor one another in conversation with the asking and answering of questions. This is the only way to dive into the depths and the details of the issues in the governance of our nation. This is the only way to have any real political power.

**Once we have refuted all that is refutable, anything that is left standing is a matter of common agreement.** After we establish some common ground agreements about values and goals the next step is the actual work of useful political talk. In this next step, we work out our differences using the mutually established, agreed upon, and irrefutable common ground as a standard of reference for all future political talk. Once

we agree upon a certain standard or principle of justice, freedom, lawful practice, or constitutionally faithful conduct, this standard or principle must be referred to in future conversations about the governance of our nation. **This common ground is irrefutable to the extent that it is constructed out of mutual agreements that are forged when people feel comfortable enough to critically question and examine their values, goals, principles, and other claims together in conversation. An agreed-upon principle shared in common is not of value in one moment, but casually discarded as worthless in the next moment. We seek to create agreements that endure. The durability of this shared common ground for discussing the common good is the working space we need to be a creative power in politics.**

When we examine claims during our political talk to establish common ground, we seek to refute as much as possible in order to test all claims, values, goals, and principles for their worthiness. Will they stand or fall? Do we all understand their nature and function the same way? Will we keep them as originally stated, or will the sharing modify how we think of them? This process of examining claims is a process of resolving our differences through refutation, where we reduce what we agree upon to that which we cannot refute between ourselves.

***What we cannot refute together and therefore agree upon becomes the irrefutable common ground that will be the foundation for all future political conversations.***

This is a simple idea. Nobody works with anyone on a task or project without establishing the goals they will share in their work. Two carpenters who are going to work together share a common goal and know ahead of time exactly what they are working together to build, whether it be a cabinet, a wooden bench, or the frame of a house. Without exception, a clear understanding of a shared goal is part of the common ground we all need to work together in every area of life. The carpenters share their knowledge of common values pertaining to the specifics of each project. For example, when making a chair out of wood they know the value of a chair is to support the weight of the person sitting in it. The carpenters share common principles and methods that govern how they are going to make this thing out of wood. If two carpenters were working together in the absence of sharing any values, goals, principles, and methods pertaining to their work, they would not be working together at all. This kind of unenlightened teamwork will always fail. It is true that politics is more complex than carpentry, and in this truth is the importance of developing a skillful ability and willingness to both recognize and publically admit ignorance. Nothing is refutable for those who act like they know everything and pretend to be correct all the time. In the partisan pretense of always being right, all of our political power dies as we shamefully allow ourselves to talk like babies who only know what they want in the simplest of terms and in the absence of reasoning.

Citizens, like a team of carpenters, must also share common values, goals, and principles in order for the shared work of our political talk to affect the governance of the nation. In the absence of common ground, no focus can make our conversations useful

for anything. Two citizens may think they are having a useful political talk, but in the hyper-partisan absence of any shared, values, goals, or principles, we are merely indulging ourselves in a shared delusion that is killing our nation.

Making a daily habit of focusing on questions that examine all claims, values, goals, principles, and behaviors in our living is a decent approximation of Socrates' ideal of living an examined life. This "examined life" is the only path toward regaining our political power through real talk.

## **7. THE ENGINE THAT POWERS IT ALL:**

### **Become skillful at recognizing and admitting your own ignorance.**

It is hard to examine claims, values, goals, and principles honestly if we are afraid to be proven wrong or refuse to admit either error or ignorance. The partisan believes they must never be proven in error because they only know the fake zero-sum game of Red vs. Blue. The passionate partisan always puts their party before their country as they lie to themselves and others about knowing everything. We know this is deadly wrong. Nobody pretends to know when real work must be done because fake knowledge kills the productivity and effectiveness of the work. We know this. We know it in every aspect of our ordinary lives. We simply need to learn it in our politics as well. Just as we must voluntarily reject the use of all partisan references, we must stop pretending to know what we do not know. Citizens who do not pretend to be omniscient are able to ask powerful questions.

In the section above titled,

#### **"Socrates' Ignorance as The Beginning of All Solutions"**

We made the statement that "honesty is the foundation of all reform". Being honest about the state of our knowledge is the prerequisite for powerfully effective political talk. Being honest about our known responsibility to reason effectively is absolutely necessary prerequisite for political reform in the United States. Let us be clear. I am not talking about reforming Congress or K-Street. I am talking about reforming the hideously bad habits of political talk embraced by most Americans. In the absence of those bad habits of fake political talk, it would be impossible for our government to be this corrupt and ineffective. What the people hold themselves accountable to do they have the power to hold politicians accountable to do. What the people allow for themselves they allow for politicians. We The People must take a stand and hold ourselves accountable to knowledge, reasoning, and honesty in order to engage in the power of real political talk. Only then can we force politicians to be accountable as well.

The admission of ignorance has three significant descriptions of scope. There is ignorance of the facts of the issues. There is ignorance of our own values, goals, and principles. There is also our ignorance of one another. They are equally important for the quality of our political talk. Socrates' only boast of wisdom reveals a key dynamic of political reform for U.S. politics.

"I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know.

- Socrates in Plato's *Apology*, (21d)"

Being skillful at admitting ignorance publically is in direct opposition to the partisan practice of making unsubstantiated claims because the partisan wants to seem to know it all and to make everyone believe the partisan is always correct.

In order to recognize the truth of our ignorance and embrace the demands that our ignorance makes upon us to improve our understanding, we simply stop playing the fake game of Red Team vs Blue Team. Real political talk is not the cheering of passive spectators rooting for their team. We The People were never ment to be sitting on the sidelines of the game. Real political talk tears apart and tests every political claim (both Red and Blue) in order to hold ourselves accountable to knowledge in the examination of values, goals, principles, and issues. The examination of claims is the productive workhorse of all political talk. It is impossible to do this when our only political passion is to win a fake game of Red vs Blue by pretending to know everything. Political talk has no power when partisan victory is more important than truth.

When we recognize and publically admit our ignorance in a political conversation, it allows us to take power over the people we are talking to. The nature of this power is that in admitting ignorance, we put the heavy responsibility of answering questions on the other person. The key to transforming ignorance into power is knowing when we are ignorant. Recognizing that we are profoundly ignorant is not a posture of pretense or a rhetorical strategy to gain some kind of Red vs. Blue advantage. On the contrary, genuinely knowing that we are ignorant of most things, which is a plain truth of human existence, helps us look at the other with an honest desire to understand them.

The greatest irony of American politics is that in our age of great knowledge, which empowers us to see to do what previous humanity could not even imagine, it is our ability to recognize our own ignorance and act accordingly that is our most significant power to participate in the governance of our nation.

### **Concluding Comment:**

In order to take back your political power, hold yourself accountable to knowledge and the exercise of reason just as you would in your daily life. In terms of basic focus and conversational respect, what you would not accept in talk about fixing your car or fixing your own body you ought not to accept in talk about fixing the nation. Stay on topic. Stop wasting your mind's energy with partisan distractions. Stop rushing to embrace the illusion of winning; take your time in political talk. Ask lots of questions and examine ALL claims in political talk. Examine and question your own values, goals, and principles. Examine and question your own behavior and the behavior of the nation. Real talk serves the most important foundation of our nation. The necessary foundation of our

constitutional republic is that We The People work together to create irrefutable common ground. Standing together, united on the basis of what we share is real power. Hating on each other because of differences that have been blown way out of proportion is how we fail and fall. Realize that empowering it all, is becoming skillful at recognizing and admitting our own ignorance. Tyranny pretends to know everything and pretends to always be correct. Real talk among real citizens embraces the recognition of ignorance in order to clear the path to gain understanding. Questions are the living soul of democracy. Pat answers are the putrified soul of tyranny.

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## FOOTNOTES:

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[1] Orwell, George. 1984 (pp. 40, 41, 61). HMH Books. Kindle Edition.

[2] Newspeak = "new speak" not "news speak"

[3] Orwell, George. 1984 (p. 63). HMH Books. Kindle Edition.

[4] "Hermann Göring". *Museum of Tolerance Multimedia Learning Center*. Archived from the original on 27 December 2004 at Archive.org (<https://web.archive.org/web/20041227105306/http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/text/x18/xr1883.html>). The context of the quote: "An early recruit of Hitler's, Goring was wounded at the Munich beer hall putsch. While recovering, he developed an addiction to morphine-a tendency he never completely shook. But his devotion to Hitler was unabated: "If the Fuhrer wants it," he proclaimed, "two and two make five!" In return for such loyalty, Hitler showered Goring with more and more power-plus titles, medals and other perquisites the vainglorious Goring loved."

[5] In 1984, the nation of Oceania included the former United States.

[6] Orwell, George. 1984 (p. 40). HMH Books. Kindle Edition.

[7] *ibid.*, (Appendix: Principles of Newspeak).

[8] *ibid.*, (p. 41)

[9] *ibid.*, (p. 41)

[10] *ibid.*, (p. 29)

[11] *ibid.*, (p. 41)

[12] *ibid.*, (p. 164)

[13] *ibid.*, (p. 121)

[14] In George Orwell's novel *1984*, *The Ministry of Truth (had) three slogans: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.*

[15] Although this essay states the relation between freedom and slavery in terms of the loss of reason, there is a correlation between our interpretation of this slogan and its interpretation within the novel. On P. 208 where O'Brian tells Winston Smith that this slogan can be reversed (Slavery is Freedom), he says that the individual, who is free as an independent, is alone and defeated. But when the individuals surrender their individual identity and merges with the collective (the Party), then they gain a kind of power and immortality. (thus "Slavery is Freedom") Safety, survivability, and a kind of collective based longevity are associated with freedom in the novel. In our interpretation, there is also a relationship between individuality and the collective. Independent reasoning within every citizen gives rise to the propagation of a diversity of independent perspectives. The exercise of our capacity to reason is an essential assertion of individual identity. When individuals give up their capacity to reason they give up some of their independent individuality. They give up their own reasoning powers to join the collective mass, simplistically repeating the marketing slogans and memes of the party. The loss of individuality is replaced with a new group identity. But in this case as asserted in this essay, freedom is absurd without knowledge and a capacity to reason, which makes our freedom accessible and beneficial.

[16] Orwell, George. 1984 (p. 166). HMH Books. Kindle Edition.

[17] Ingsoc is an abbreviation of "English Socialism", which is the political philosophy of the Party's totalitarian government of Oceania

[18] Orwell, George. 1984 (p. 167). HMH Books. Kindle Edition.

[19] *ibid.*, (p. 210)

[20] Chomsky, Noam. Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda. (1994).

[21] Orwell, George. 1984 (p. 167). HMH Books. Kindle Edition.

[22] *ibid.*, (Appendix: Principles of Newspeak).

[23] *ibid.*, (Appendix: Principles of Newspeak).

[24] *ibid.*, (p. 40)

[25] *ibid.*, (p. 41)

[26] Sagan, Carl. *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, Headline Book Publishing, 1997, p. 28

[27] *ibid.*, (p. 28)

[28] If I wanted to make this a much larger work, I could have written on how both Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World* both illustrate the functioning of the dystopian model of U.S. political talk.

[29] This is a paraphrase of the preamble to the constitution, which reads, " "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

[30] *ibid.*, (p. 211)

[31] *ibid.*, (p. 152)

[32] Sagan, Carl. *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, Headline Book Publishing, 1997, p. 230

[33] Orwell, George. 1984 (p. 220). HMH Books. Kindle Edition.

[34] *ibid.*, (p. 162)

[35] Kant, Immanuel. *Kant: Political Writings* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought) (p. 54). Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition.

[36] Kant, Immanuel. *Kant: Political Writings* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought) (pp. 54-55). Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition.

[37] Kant, Immanuel. *Kant: Political Writings* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought) (p. 55). Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition.

[38] Orwell, George. 1984 (p. 62) HMH Books. Kindle Edition.

[39] *ibid.*, (p. 62)

[40] Quote is from the Preamble of the Constitution of The United States.

[41] Henri J.M. Nouwen (1986), *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*, Doubleday, p. 71

[42] Orwell, George. 1984 (p. 63). HMH Books. Kindle Edition.



**The Beauty of the Conservative Mind**  
**Conservatism and The Examined Life**  
**by**  
**Max Maxwell and Melete**

One of the most used words in U.S. politics is the word conservative. Conservatism is proclaimed by many people to be a style of interpreting the world and formulating our living practices that is needed in order to optimize the health of any society. When spoken of by its most enthusiastic advocates, the idea of conservatism is always presented like a beacon of all that is good in our democratic republic. Its promise rings in the ear like a message of salvation. All we need to do is heed its call. But what is the call of conservatism? This important word is used daily in speech and in writing, which is consumed by millions of Americans. But does it have a shared public meaning or is everyone thinking different things when using the word conservatism? Before we can explore what is of value in conservatism, we have to ask a basic question that we almost never hear asked in public by politicians, pundits, or TV ministers. Our pursuit of the fundamentally important question below will involve a defining look at the life and civilization preserving benefit that conservatism offers to individuals and the nation in which we live.

**What is Conservatism?**

One of the things I (Max) learned from my reading of Plato is that, if I am going to use an important word in a sentence, I should know what the word means. Words such as justice, virtue, courage, goodness, piety, righteousness, beauty, and friendship, should have real meanings that endure. I also learned from Plato that the more important and central the word is to the living of a human life, the more difficult it is likely going to be to define clearly. A word like, conservatism (or conservative), which is used so much, is so important to political and social discourse in the U.S., and plays a role in the identities of millions of people, should have clear meaning that can be shared publically in useful ways. Plato taught me to be suspicious of my own individual understanding and to seek the wisdom of the society in which I lived. So it was that I began to ask people, who identified as conservative, a very important question.

"What is conservatism?"

What I discovered as I talked to people, who identified as conservative, is that the terms conservative and conservatism are not terms whose meanings are publicly known and shared in a precise manner. Some conservatives were very clear and knowledgeable about the traditional origin of their perspectives and about the nature of their commitments to bring an esteemed heritage to life. My conversations about conservatism also revealed the existence of conservatives who are unable to define or understand the meaning of their own conservatism. Based on years of my conversations with conservatives about social and political issues, which originally began in full back in 1987, and my observations of contemporary public political discourse, it is clear that there are a large number of conservatives in the United States who are unable to explain their own conservatism. This problem is growing and the

wider spread this problem becomes, the closer we come to making the word conservatism an empty label that means nothing. If we allow conservatism to come to the point of meaning nothing, then the good that conservatism can bring forth is brought to nothing.

Some of the conservatives, who did not know how to articulate their own understanding of conservatism, seemed to have memorized the second hand talk of others and were just repeating it back to me like a parrot. The problem was that what they were repeating had little to do with defining conservatism. Automatically repeating the political or religious marketing slogans that we hear on the news and see on internet is no substitute for expressing a capacity to engage in genuinely conservative reasoning about the world. Thoughtlessly repeating what we have heard repeated is something any child can do. But expressing a developed capacity for excellence in conservative reasoning is something that all conservatives can learn to do with confidence. Our country desperately needs conservative excellence more than ever before.

While trying to explain their conservatism, some conservatives did not seem to understand the nature of a conservative principle as it relates to thinking about the world. Responses to the question of defining conservatism such as, "I believe in America." or "I reject socialism." do not articulate conservative principles that influence how we think and live. Such responses are, at best, only the outcomes of a thought process that presuppose the existence of an unspoken conservative perspective. This kind of response is also not able to define conservatism because the responses above are not capable of distinguishing the conservative believer and rejecter from the non-conservative believer and rejecter. Any data, idea, principle, or belief that is incapable of helping us distinguish the conservative from the non-conservative is incapable of helping us define conservatism. Whenever I ask further questions to clarify the meaning of conservatism, I typically find that many conservatives' enthusiasm to engage in reciting what they have memorized is not accompanied by an equal quality of enthusiasm to engage in their own reasoning about their own worldview or to stay focused on the issues that conservatism demands we examine in detail.

As my talks with fellow conservatives touched upon the issues of our time, I found that a significant number of people had trouble staying focused, which stopped them from exercising their capacity to reason about the important issues facing our nation. Their focus was in bondage to an obsession with low grade gossip about the defects of the personal character of individual people and groups. This melodramatic focus on soap-opera like personal defects of political actors and imaginary enemies, had replaced any high quality focus on the social and political issues that are affecting our nation. Judging by the absolute dominance of attacking people instead of discussing ideas that we find in U.S. political conversations, it is obvious that this phenomenon is wide spread among the entire population of the United States. The very idea that it is important and necessary to directly discuss and interpret the ideas and principles, which are part of the foundation of governing individual lives and nations, is less interesting to many conservatives than talking about every traceable perversion of people on the public stage. Cheap trash talk, long winded melodramas, and an insatiable vulnerability to

distraction have left many conservatives unable to stay focused on a single socially or politically useful topic. Cheap, irrelevant, soap-opera like talk masquerades as useful political conversations in most of our public political conversations. Vulgar and politically meaningless trash talk has completely replaced productive discussions about the actual political and social issues in the minds of many people. Conservatism will never be defined or faithfully expressed through our capacity to engage in empty trash talk.

In today's political landscape, there is no shortage of self-proclaimed conservatives who have no self-aware interest in understanding the conservative principles of their own worldview or how those principles must shape their thinking on the issues. Instead of expressing the necessary due diligence with regard to reasoning about important issues, many conservatives are endlessly consumed with a passion to just thoughtlessly repeat a party approved marketing slogan or religious talking point, express a flight of emotion, or to express some vague, ill-defined notion of "owning the libs". Vague, undefined ideas of winning seem to hold sway over many people's minds as they proceeded to spend all of their energies attacking people instead of reasoning about ideas and issues. Exactly what people think they are going to win with such unproductive, uncivil behavior is a mystery. When the ability of citizens to reason together about important issues takes a back seat to childish bickering and personal disrespect, everyone loses. George Washington was well aware of the evils of allowing a partisan party spirit to take hold of the country.

"The common and continual mischief's [sic] of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and the duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it. It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foment occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passion."

- George Washington, Farewell Speech, 1796

Conservatives who respond to political talk with an obsession to attack people instead of reasoning about ideas demonstrate a disturbingly undeveloped understanding of what it means to realistically talk politics as a conservative. Obsessions with personal disputation reveal a lack of understanding of how to apply principled conservative thinking to the most important issues of our time. What can conservatism ever amount to in the minds of people who are obsessed with personal bickering? The extraordinary national importance of our need for conservatives to be able to express a capacity for effective conservative reasoning cannot be overstated. It is through the conservatively biased reasoning of principled conservatives that the full benefit of conservatism is brought forth to serve the good of the nation. The nature of that benefit will be clarified as we proceed.

Russell Kirk, the most influential American conservative that most U.S. citizens have never heard of, is looked up to by those who know of him as a father of modern American conservatism and has done more than anyone to add defining substance to

American conservatism. William F. Buckley, the founder of the National Review, was one of the most widely known and influential conservatives of the 20th century. William Buckley said of Russell Kirk: "It is inconceivable even to imagine, let alone hope for, a dominant conservative movement in America without Kirk's labor."<sup>1</sup>

Kirk's most important work relative to the advance of the conservative movement in the United States is the public version of his doctoral dissertation, *The Conservative Mind*<sup>2</sup>, published in 1953. Kirk described the book as "a prolonged essay in definition". Kirk began the book with a couple of powerful opening lines that were a sharp declaration about the intellectual viability of conservatives:

"'The stupid party': this is John Stuart Mill's description of conservatives. Like certain other summary dicta which nineteenth-century liberalism thought to be forever triumphant, his judgment needs review in our age of disintegrating liberal and radical philosophies."

The publication of this book in the 1950's gave a tremendous boost to the existence of a self-aware conservative movement in the United States. Immediately following these two opening lines Kirk acknowledged, "Certainly many dull and unreflecting people have lent their inertia to the cause of conservatism". He illustrated this statement with a history professor's observation that it has been sufficient for practical purposes for some conservatives to not think at all. Kirk acknowledges the history of non-thinking conservatives and takes some pains to put this all nicely. Yet, after he describes Edmund Burke's affectionate metaphor for conservatives as cattle passively sitting under the English oak trees, deaf to innovation, Kirk begins a significant criticism.

Immediately after the Burke metaphor, Kirk writes "But" and continues, "the conservative principle has been defended, these past two centuries, by men of learning and genius." The nature of Kirk's criticism is illustrated in that the book's very existence, which explores the history of conservative ideas in light of the aforementioned "learning and genius", is evidence that Kirk believed it is not sufficient for a conservative to be "dull and unreflecting", a non-thinking conservative, or one of Burke's cows.

Feulner, the founder of the Heritage Foundation wrote: "Kirk was proud to be a conservative. The true conservative, he insists, is not the cruel caricature of a "dull, boorish, bigoted and avaricious being" presented by most liberal and radical journalists and politicians."<sup>3</sup>

Kirk did not believe that true conservatives needed to be intellectuals with PhDs. For Kirk, all it requires to not be a dull, Burkean cow is for a conservative to express an ordinary human capacity to be a thoughtful person with the knowledge of a heritage that is important to them. Feulner continued,

"The true conservative, Kirk says, could be many different people: a "resolute and strong-minded" clergyman; a farmer who "holds fast" to the wisdom of his ancestors; a truck driver in the very heart of the metropolis; a proprietor with an ancient name

endeavoring to moderate inevitable change by "prudence and good nature"; an old-fashioned manufacturer, diligent, shrewd, and just; a physician who knows human nature too well to talk of social perfectibility; a lawyer who understands we cannot divorce ourselves from history; a schoolmaster who knows there is no reward without labor. The true conservative is a man of the future rooted in the past. All of these true conservatives, Kirk says, prefer the old and the tried to the novel and the dubious, and in whatever they do, endeavor to safeguard the institutions and the wisdom of the past, not slavishly but prudently."

There is no heritage of our past that can have any meaning or value in the absence of efforts to employ the knowledge of it in our reasoning. If the past does not influence how we interpret the present, it is impossible for us to be conservative. Kirk knew that it is impossible for conservatism to be fully functional in the absence of a capacity to reason. To the extent that the call of conservatism is also a call to excellence in reasoning (an idea that will be engaged below), it seems a matter of common sense to assert that it is not sufficient for a conservative to allow themselves to be reduced to the meager functioning of a talking party parrot or Burkean cow. Conservatism, in the hands of thinking citizens, has more power to serve the good of the nation than the mindless chatter of parrots can ever bring forth. Conservatism, as the principled engine of insight in the hands of willfully thoughtful human beings, has more benefit to secure and deliver to the people than the thoughtless, instinctual inclinations of Burke's cattle will ever manifest. Parrots and cattle cannot lead the way into the future, but thinking, principled, conservatives can.

Kirk's study on defining conservatism resulted in the articulation of conservative principles. A principled conservative is distinguishable from a conservative who claims the name by virtue of identity. Some of the people I talked to thought their involvement with a particular group or support for a particular law made them conservative. "I am a Christian therefore I am conservative." No. There are Christians who identify as liberal. "I am a Republican therefore I am conservative." No. Voting Republican is a chosen outcome. What conservative principles influenced your thinking to choose to vote Republican? The same is true for voting in support of a particular policy. Supporting the policy itself does not make you a conservative; the principles that shaped your thinking to support that policy say more about your conservatism. This is true because both liberals and conservatives can support the same policy yet get there through different styles of thinking. Neither being a Christian nor voting Republican defines conservatism at all. Not your family, your religion, your political party membership, not the fact of your support for a particular policy position or law, nor your job, defines conservatism. I will go as far as to say that nothing to do with your identity has anything to do with defining conservatism.

What is conservatism? The only way to have an "ism" is for that "ism" to draw its life from its habitation in a human mind. The only way to inhabit a human mind is for the "ism" to have principles that affect how the mind operates. The process of defining conservatism, therefore, must involve defining conservative principles that guide how we think and live. If we are not guided at all by conservative principles in our thinking

and living, how can we uphold any conservatism at all? When asked to define the principles of conservatism, some conservative's understanding of this was incomplete and fragmented. These fragmented understandings of conservatism seemed to leave people adrift without any help from clearly conservative principles to hold them fast to a productively conservative course. If conservatism lacks all principles then conservatism ceases to exist. This is why it is grossly insufficient for conservatives to reduce ourselves to blindly repeating the talking points of our political party or religion as would be fitting for a talking parrot. In the absence of exercising our capacity to reason in a conservative manner, the conservative gives up all power to personally make a difference. When we mindlessly repeat something, we are not expressing our own power. We are not making our own contribution. We have merely become an echo of someone else's power and contribution. The United States of America does not need a population of mindless echoes, who are only capable of repeating without thought what they have already heard repeated. We need a body of fully engaged citizens, who are principled, thoughtful conservatives that can make their own contribution to the public good.

How can one stand up for anything in a conservative manner without conservative principles influencing our minds? If we cannot exercise our capacity to reason in a way biased by conservative principles, we will not stand for anything in an authentically conservative manner. This also means that, in the absence of a principled, thoughtful understanding of our own conservatism, we will fall for everything that pretends to be conservative. And so in our time we see the presence of non-conservative charlatans pretending conservatism in front of significant numbers of conservative identified people who are unable to understand or apply their own worldview.

Some people responded to the question of conservative principle by exclaiming a slogan they heard on TV or at a rally such as "Free Market!" or "No Socialism!". The blunt truth is that if one's only idea of conservative principles is to repeat without thought a few overly simplified party slogans that are not even properly understood, such a person is not a principled conservative. In the absence of expressing our own capacity to reason in a conservative style, we allow the beauty and power of our conservatism to die. Fully functioning conservatism requires the influence of conservative principles. The importance of having conservative principles presupposes that we are going to be using the knowledge of our own heritage as we exercise our capacity to reason during our attempts to interpret the world. In the absence of any thoughtfulness of mind, the existence of a conservative mind is impossible. Neither principles nor knowledge have any habitation in a mind that chooses not to reason. This is a critical distinction.

### **The Accountability of Knowledge: Politics, Arts, Trades, and Sciences**

Nobody would use the word conservatism, as it is popularly used for social and political issues, in the context of the methods of mathematics or the tasks that are attended to by engineers. The people of the United States have different standards for

accountability in the talk about practical arts, trades, and sciences than we have for our discussions about social and political topics. Nobody would tolerate the simplistic, uninformed, irrational talk we get in commentary on political issues if it came from an auto mechanic fixing our car or a surgeon who was about to operate on our brain. If you heard your doctors talking about your upcoming surgery and realized, to your immense horror, that they were talking like politicians, meaning they were ignoring the full details of your medical condition, refused to talk in depth about the details of their diagnosis and proposed solution, and spent most of their time and energy accusing each other of weirdly corrupt things, you would run for your life. We demand in all areas of life that all people use their capacity to reason, that they stay focused on issues, and that they work to actually solve the problems at hand...except for politics. We would never accept the childish personal attacks, the refusals to realistically discuss the actual details of problems, or the melodramatic antics of circus like distractions, if they happened in the context of the functioning of any practical art, trade, or science that affects our daily life. The refusal to realistically talk in depth about real problems and solutions in the absence of personal attacks is obviously ridiculous when real work needs to be completed. But such ridiculous, unproductive talk is the bread and butter of politicians and political pundits.

What is it about social and political issues that we allow politicians to offer only simplistic slogans when such issues are complex? We would never tolerate mere slogans from someone selling us a house if that person does not let us inspect the house in detail. Why do we allow politicians to get away with such behavior with their policy positions? Almost everyone allows politicians to persistently avoid discussing the full details of the issues and their proposed solutions to problems. The failure to hold politicians accountable to knowledge points our attention to the fact that there are no real specialists in politics. Our ability to apply knowledge and to be accountable to knowledge in the arts, trades, and sciences seems to be of a different order than that of politics. The primary reason for this is that the end goal of an art, trade, or science is clear. It is easier to hold people immediately accountable to their claims of knowledge when a goal is clearly defined. A carpenter makes things out of wood. Everyone agrees that producing things made of wood is clearly the end goal of all carpentry. But what is the end goal of a society? The object of the art of painting is to produce a painting. But what is the object of the art of living? The performance values in the arts, trades, and sciences can be measured with precision because the ends are defined with precision. But what is the measure of a life well lived and a nation well governed? What knowledge and skill is relevant to that?

When we are reasoning about the complexities of governing an individual human life or a society, things are less clear. The end goals of life are not defined with the same universal consensus as we enjoy with the practical goals of the specific arts, trades, and sciences that we employ in our daily living. The question of what proper values and end goals should be used to structure individual and social life lacks a universal consensus on the answer. All carpenters know when it is desired for two pieces of wood to be bound together and when they should be loosed from one another. All carpenters know the best methods for binding and loosening. When there is disagreement on such things,

carpenters know how to resolve such disagreements in a technically efficient manner. But what should be bound and what should be let free in a society? There is no standardized agreement on social obligations and freedoms, and the exact knowledge needed for resolving disagreements is less than clear. We are more confident and hold ourselves to a higher standard in the arts, trades, and sciences because the ends have been decided through overwhelming consensus. When we are only required to employ instrumental reasoning to achieve the means to clearly defined ends, the accountability to knowledge is firmly within our grasp. But when we are required to reason about the fundamental values and end goals of life itself, we are not as confident about reaching a consensus.

When there is a lack of consensus about the fundamental values and end goals of a society, the need for effective reasoning about our values and goals as a society becomes vitally necessary. As carpenters call upon the history of their art to clarify the needs of today's job, conservatives call upon the history of our heritage to assist in our reasoning about the end goals of a life well lived and the means to them. Yet, when a carpenter uses some of the same methods of the carpenters of ages past because it is the most efficient way to work, they are not said to be conservative. Purely instrumental reasoning and acting, in which the fundamental values and end goals are already decided, are free to repeat the past without the need for terms like conservative or liberal. However, when we need to decide what values and end goals we should uphold in life, the terms conservative and liberal are often brought into consideration.

Nobody works a job where the knowledge of a trade is deployed and they are required to rethink the end goal of that trade. The end goals of all trades are clearly defined and specialized knowledge of each trade is commonly available. But there are no specialists in politics. The end goals of a nation regarding the public good defy easy consensus. When we find we also have to reason about the values and goals of life itself in addition to reasoning about our means to already defined ends, this dramatically increases the demand to put in our best effort. Reasoning about values and end goals is a much more difficult task. This is precisely why conservatism is insistent on calling us to embrace the heritage of our past as an ally in helping us to think clearly about the present. Because of the increased complexity and demand that comes with values based reasoning, those who speak on social and political issues have more need to be held accountable to knowledge than do the practitioners of arts, trades, and sciences in which being a specialist is common. The lack of political specialization, which is mostly due to the lack of consensus in defined end goals and fundamental operational values, gives us a greater work load. In politics there is more need for the rigors of being held accountable, not less. Conservatism invites us to lessen the burden by incorporating the knowledge of our heritage to assist us. Conservatism sees social and political accountability to the knowledge of fundamental values and end goals partly in terms of the knowledge of our own heritage. The invitation of conservatism to use our heritage in this way relates to the essential principle of all conservatism, which will be discussed below.

Conservatism calls us to use the knowledge of our heritage to help us interpret the present. This is why, in today's time of crisis, we do not need mindless parrots who only



recite the party line by rote. We do not need those who just sit in the dead silence of their lack of ability to willfully assert their own reasoning powers and thus give rise to the image of the Burkean cow. We do not need passive consumer sheep, who are always on the lookout to purchase with their vote, the next leader to do their thinking for them. What this country needs is the presence and actions of fully functioning conservative citizens capable of speaking up with thoughtful conservative voices, which speak and act through principled conservative minds. The conservative mind is a mind that reasons about the end goals and values of life itself. The conservative mind is a mind that intimately engages the knowledge of its own heritage to assist in the task of determining the goals of a nation. Any conservative can choose to reason in a principled manner and allow their conservatism to shine as the light it is supposed to be. It is a willful choice to be a fully functioning conservative. It is willful discipline to take a genuine conservative stand in which we are obligated to express a capacity to reason about the values and end goals of life. In the art of politics, conservatives must learn to be specialist at bringing the knowledge of their heritage into the present day. The conservative mind is a mind that is accountable to the knowledge of its own heritage.

### **The Defining Work of Russell Kirk**

With regard to examining the idea of defining conservatism via principles, I simply could not rely on what I can only describe as the random chaos that came from many of the conservatives with whom I spoke. So I have chosen to examine the work of Russell Kirk. I am not claiming that Kirk's principles are THE principles of conservatism. Even Kirk did not claim this. A very important topic of conversation among conservatives, which has been severely neglected due to the deteriorated intellectual environment that infects the entertainment oriented public media and the behavior of political parties, consists of healthy public debates over the principles that define conservatism. Instead of a healthy habit of improving our understanding of what it means to live out a principled conservative worldview, we have a blind rush among self-proclaimed conservatives to artificial conformity for the sake of political expediency. Some of Kirk's principles may not be for every single conservative identified person in existence, but his attempt to define conservatism is an excellent example for all conservatives and is worthy of thoughtful consideration.

In his most defining work, *The Conservative Mind*, Kirk spells out "six canons" of conservatism. I am going to pass over the six canons of conservatism and use Kirk's ten principles of conservatism from his [1987 lecture given to the Heritage Foundation](#)<sup>4</sup>. The ten principles are a closely related to the six canons. Kirks understanding of what it means to define conservatism is a crucially important lesson for conservatives today.

Kirk's lecture begins with, "Being neither a religion nor an ideology, the body of opinion termed conservatism possesses no Holy Writ and no [Das Kapital](#) to provide dogmata." In very sharp contrast to the marketing behaviors related to popular conservatism as it is proclaimed by powerful special interests, who seek artificial uniformity as an ideological pathway to the consolidation of power, Kirk realized that, "The conservative movement or body of opinion can accommodate a considerable diversity of views on a

good many subjects, there being no [Test Act](#) or [Thirty-Nine Articles](#) of the conservative creed. (Test Act: laws serving as a religious test for public office in England; Thirty-Nine Articles: defines for members of the U.S. Protestant Episcopal Church what must be believed)". Of his own ten principles Kirk acknowledges that some conservatives may disagree with some of the principles, reiterating that "conservatism is no fixed ideology".

This is a very different attitude than popular conservatism's desire that all conservatives get in a single line, walk in lock step, and publicly say the same thing at all times. To the extent that the special interests who dominantly shape conservative political behavior in the U.S. have emphasized conformity to the point of mimicking ideology for the purpose of marketing themselves, they have betrayed an essential characteristic of conservatism. A regular habit of American political and social leaders today is to want passive followers, who can faithfully repeat the party line without thought. The conservative mind never simplistically embraces, and tenaciously repeats without thought, the advertising slogans of today's marketing...I mean...election cycle. Extraordinary varieties of thought and healthy public debates between conservatives naturally arise when conservatively inclined minds exercise their powers of reasoning. Thoughtfully principled conservatives are not considered by the cynical marketing arms of the political parties to be politically advantageous to party power. However, fully functioning, principled conservatives, who bring the knowledge of their heritage into public discourse about the values and goals of our nation, are a power for good that is desperately needed the United States.

(A note regarding Kirk's use of the phrase: "the body of opinion termed conservatism" With the use of the term opinion, which will also be referred to below, we are not talking about whether or not the heritage we desire to conserve has truth. Opinion refers to the belief of any particular conservative as to what portion of heritage should be conserved, and how that conservation should be performed. Even if a portion of our heritage, which the conservative wishes to conserve, is all truth; it is still just the opinion of the conservative that it should be conserved. It is also the opinion of the conservative as to exactly how we must act in order to conserve the truth and knowledge of our heritage.)

### **Some Conservative Principles Must Actually Be About Conserving**

**The minimal essence of all possible conservatism is that something is conserved.** Abraham Lincoln asked and answered, "What is conservatism? Is it not the adherence to the old and tried against the new and untried?"<sup>5</sup> Something of the legacy of our civilization's past must be brought into today's thinking, living, and structuring of society in order for there to be any conservatism at all. This essence, which has its strongest expression in traditional conservatism, is well illustrated in the first four of Kirk's principles. The first four principles of Kirk's ten principles of conservatism are an articulate expression of the essence of all possible conservatism, which is founded on the notion that something should be conserved.

The text in bold are the principles quoted from Kirk's 1987 lecture, the non-bold text is my commentary on Kirk's principles as they relate to the state of conservatism in the U.S. today.

**1. The conservative believes that there exists an enduring moral order. That order is made for man, and man is made for it: human nature is a constant, and moral truths are permanent.**

*Enduring moral order* is an important phrase. With this principle, Kirk is not talking about today's convenient "truths" and "values", who's meaning and relevance varies from election cycle to election cycle. In the mission statement of the National Review, which William Buckley founded, Buckley was critical of the liberal tendency to vet their society redesigning abstract principles in the voting booth, "The profound crisis of our era is, in essence, the conflict between the Social Engineers, who seek to adjust mankind to conform with scientific utopias, and the disciples of Truth, who defend the organic moral order. *We believe that truth is neither arrived at nor illuminated by monitoring election results, binding though these are for other purposes, but by other means, including a study of human experience. On this point we are, without reservations, on the conservative side.*<sup>6</sup>(Italic emphasis mine)"

Blindly repeating party marketing slogans to win political points is no replacement for a genuinely conservative and thoughtful study of the history of human experience, which has given us the rich legacy of our civilization's vast heritage. In the absence of knowing our own heritage, conservatism dies through the inability to conserve anything. Buckley's criticism of the "liberal" style of determining truth is well applied to the unprincipled conservatives of today, who embrace the "party before all" mentality. The conservative mind knows that the truth is not just whatever happens to win an election. That we can do a thing does not mean that we should do it. Truth is not proven through democracy. The majority can be wrong, especially when the parties work hard to avoid giving due diligence to the public vetting of issues through rational dialogue. And when the parties deploy deception in the marketing of themselves, we need to remember that the lies, which happen to get votes, do not therefore become the truths that deserve the approval of principled conservatives. Principled conservatives do not play word games with "alternative facts" or with the justification of morally dubious positions that fly in the face of established tradition. Principled conservatives cannot afford to remain silent in the presence of so many pseudo-conservative actors who are willing to sacrifice all morals and truth to the only truth that means anything to them (i.e. winning an election and having lots of money). It is time to stop thinking about the welfare of this or that political party and start thinking about the welfare of conservatism and of the nation itself.

Kirk's first principle is not talking about the political habit of having morals that only apply to our opponents but not to us. Kirk is referring to an enduring moral order that is the moral foundation of harmony within all individuals and whole societies. It endures for the whole of one's life. This enduring moral order lasts from generation to generation and from age to age, providing the foundation of harmony and stability for nations and civilizations. This order is rooted in and draws its nature from the enduring character of humanity. The basic truths of living as a human being have been discerned and responded to over the course of millennia. The legacy of our heritage, which has been handed down to us through the knowledge and traditions of our religions, philosophies,

and the structures of nations, are realities of life that do not change just because this or that current party leader decides it is easier to do something new just to win an election. The shallow, abject lying and cheating going on in the political parties today, which have replaced a proper reverence for truth and morality, are not behaviors that can in any way be called conservative. A traditional reverence for the moral truths and the governing structures, which have been vetted by centuries of human experience, is not an obsolete sentiment that can be discarded by leaders according to the whims of their political avarice. Principled conservatives insist that a reverence for the moral truths that endure must remain a part of the foundation of conservatism. Whipping up reverence for any new thing that happens to be convenient for today's election is never a substitute for genuine conservatism, which always seeks to maintain a rich continuity with its own history.

John Adams said in 1775, "Public virtue cannot exist in a Nation without private Virtue, and public Virtue is the only Foundation of Republics."<sup>7</sup> A politics that exists without reverence for the integrity of the human character of the individual cannot bring forth the public virtue of the nation. A politics that disregards the enduring moral and epistemological foundations of conservatism in exchange for the pragmatic expedience of today's temporary political advantage is not a conservative politics. Out of the enduring moral order come enduring moral truths, which the conservative mind must consider. The pseudo-conservative, unprincipled actors, who reject the notion of any enduring moral order in favor of "whatever wins today", must be rejected as representatives of conservatism.

## **2. The conservative adheres to custom, convention, and continuity.**

A deadly force that is destroying American conservatism on a massive scale is the dominance of forgetfulness and ignorance in the minds of self-proclaimed conservatives with regard to the heritage that they want to conserve. When we forget the moral, social, and political legacies of our civilization, our nation, our religions, and the history of thought, which have been vetted over many generations and centuries, the best of established customs and conventions cannot influence our thinking on current issues. Today, it is so common that the cartoonish meme of the current hour has more power of influence over the average conservative than the whole history of the established conventions and customs of an entire civilization. Today, a 10 second sound bite from some TV talking head has more weight in the thinking of many conservatives than the whole history of a nation or a religion. For many conservatives today, the life giving continuity with our heritage, which is the very soul of conservatism itself, is murdered in the sleep of forgetful ignorance.

The thoughtfulness of the conservative mind is grounded in the continuity of its connection to the past. Detailed, rich, meaningful, and life giving continuity with our civilization's legacies of moral truths, principles, structures of government, and proprieties of social convention must inform the conservative mind as it thinks about the issues of our day. The conservative mind embraces custom, convention, and continuity, because this quintessentially conservative habit improves our ability to reason with

excellence about individual, social and political issues. In the complete absence of this embrace, it is impossible to be conservative. How can one conserve a heritage, if one has no knowledge of that heritage? In disconnection from our civilization's customs, conventions, and in the absence of all such continuity with the legacies of our past, the unprincipled conservative is conservative in name only. In such a disconnected condition, the unprincipled conservative has arrived at the point where the name conservative means nothing.

When we allow the best of the legacies of our civilization to inform us and help guide us, we can think and behave as conservatives who actually possess a valuable heritage and can actually make a useful difference. The conservative mind is biased against novel pronouncements and abstract reasoning that are asserted in a disconnected way from our past conventions and traditions. But when conservatives forget, or worse yet, are just completely ignorant about the profound depth and details of the heritage of their own country or religion, we cease to be conservative in any measurable way except that we may have some remnant of inert inclination akin to one of Edmund Burke's cows. Adherence to custom, convention, and continuity, demands that we remember and are thoughtful about the best of our heritage. The forgetfulness and ignorance of so many modern American conservatives about the very things that are needed in order to make them functionally conservative is forcing them to be vulnerable to conservative pretenders. Today's conservative pretenders, who are empowered by the people's forgetful ignorance, eagerly toss genuine conservatism into the trash in the mad rush to win an election. The predominance of the forgetfulness and ignorance about the full richness of the legacies of our past is killing the power of conservatism to bring forth a beneficial contribution to the welfare of the United States of America.

### **3. Conservatives believe in what may be called the principle of prescription.**

(prescription: the action of laying down authoritative rules or directions from long continued customs)

We can study the past to determine prescriptive values for today. To know our history, to be thoughtful about that, which we inherit from our civilization, is to be empowered and lifted up by the best of those who came before us. Careful observation of our histories reveals behaviors, values, and human rights and obligations that appear, not as the one off random abstract design of some armchair philosopher, but come into being again and again in different contexts through the efforts of a great many individuals and societies. Some things should be considered for their prescriptive value as they have been shown to have value again and again, having been vetted by the unfolding of an entire civilization. The conservative is assisted in making rules for today's living through observing the history of human experience. Yet, if one is ignorant of the histories that should be informing our thinking about living, we not only lack the benefit of standing on the shoulders of giants in order to be lifted up, we cease to be meaningfully conservative at all.

Every speaker who claims the mantle of conservatism should be compared in our minds to our own knowledge of the history of values, principles, traditions, and legacies of

moral truths that help us determine if the speaker has merit or not. However, the horrifying truth is that a large number of conservatives let the power of their comparisons die by limiting it to what one TV talking head says against another TV talking head. For such unprincipled conservatives, history means nothing. The enduring truths of our civilization mean nothing. The historically vetted customs, conventions, and moral truths that are our inheritance from an ancient civilization mean less to the unprincipled conservative than the 10 second sound bite from a TV talking head. The conservative mind does not act just because someone came up with an idea. Conservatives must be thoughtful and careful that the prescriptions, which influence our ethics and behavior, have a real continuity with the heritage we have chosen to embrace. The prescriptions and normative ethics of our present day must have some continuity with our heritage in order for the fulfillment of our obligation to act to have any conservative value at all. If the dominant knowing that is used to interpret those who speak on the issues of the day is nothing but our forgetfulness and ignorance of our own heritage, then the power of conservatism in the minds of the people has been forsaken in exchange for whatever is in fashion today.

The prescriptions that the conservative mind values the most are not the disconnected novelties of today's political strategies, which lack any real coherence with the historical legacies that should be informing conservatism. The conservative mind values prescription that has grounding in time immemorial with a legacy that was produced by the historical vetting of a whole civilization. The novel innovations of any individual and the strategic contrivances of political parties must always be evaluated in the light of well established norms, values, and principles. Otherwise conservatism has no epistemological or moral distinction at all. If there are no principles, there is no conservatism. If there is one fundamental prescription for all conservatives that is clear, one prescription that has the greatest testimony of the ages, that prescription is that we must have principles. A conservative without principles cannot stand for anything as a conservative, and will fall for anything that pretends to be conservative. A conservative must have principles. In the absence of all principles, there is only one prescriptive imperative left in much of popular conservatism, which is to win at all costs. Unfortunately, this kind of poorly defined "winning" is costing us everything.

#### **4. Conservatives are guided by their principle of prudence.**

Pure abstract reasoning, which is disconnected from the long history of human experience, finds a temptation to quickness in the implementation of its designs. The rush to implement a new design is compelling. Conservatism calls us to integrate our capacities for abstract reasoning with a respect for the history that preceded us. We are called to incorporate the moral, social, and political legacies of our civilization into our own consideration of the issues. This will slow us down through the addition of the necessary labor that comes with the conservative call to integrate careful and respectful consideration of the enduring truths, customs, and conventions of our civilization into our reasoning process. The conservative mind refuses to wipe out the past in an instant of theoretical reasoning. The conservative mind does not consent to limit the whole of conservative due diligence to the time between two TV commercial breaks.

Conservatism does not reject theoretical reasoning, but calls us to improve our thinking by making sure we give our due diligence to the reasoning process through the consideration of a larger context of human experience. The religions, philosophies, structures of nations, and institutions that exist today are not just empty shells that can be discarded without further thought. They are the products of the development of our civilization, which has been built by the ongoing thought and labor of billions of people over the course of thousands of years. Conservatism insists that we spend time thoughtfully considering the value of what we have inherited.

In *The Conservative Mind*, it was explicitly Kirk's desire that we do not just sit as unthinking conservatives. Prudence is not just sitting idly in the silence of our inability to reason about issues. This means that conservatism is not just automatically obeying, like a mindless machine, anything that has a history. The only way to manifest the full character of prudence is to assert our capacity to reason about life. Kirk mentions that Edmund Burke agreed with Plato about prudence being the chief virtue for the statesman and then he wrote, "Any public measure ought to be judged by its probable long-run consequences, not merely by temporary advantage or popularity."<sup>8</sup> For Kirk there is a relationship between the judgment of long term consequences and prudence. Kirk saw that the conservative mind never embraces today's temporary advantage or fickle popularity as its foundation. The habit of political parties to judge everything in terms of today's temporary election advantage and polling results could not be further from Kirk's vision of conservative prudence. It is impossible to make a judgment about long term consequences without exercising our capacity to reason.

It is also impossible to reason effectively about policy positions when political parties desperately work to hide the full details of their policy positions from their constituents. Do you want to make the typical congress representative run from you? Just try to pin them down to the details of an issue and watch them run away. If running does not work for them they switch from rational discussion of issues to an inferior mode of dialogue, which is to just start personally attacking people and groups thereby avoiding a real conversation about issues and ideas. It is not a conservative principle to give up on reasoning. It is not a conservative principle to allow an inferior structure of dialogue to make our political conversations useless.

That inferior structure, which is the favorite method of manipulative special interests, consists of continuous partisan division. Today's continuous partisan division is regularly focused on personal attacks, which automatically excludes detailed, reasoned talk about the long-term consequences of public policy measures. The overwhelming prominence of personal attack talk, which always shuts down reasoned discussions about the issues by refocusing all talk away from issues and on to people, is the sickest defect in all of American political discourse. Of course we want the politicians to have personal character. We want that for everyone involved in our lives, the auto mechanic working on our car or the doctor who is going to operate on our brain. We want them all to have character. But the vetting of human character is a separate subject that should never replace talk about the issues of governing the nation.

Nobody talks about the human character of a biologist and thinks they just had a conversation about the science of biology. You would never talk about the human ethics of a carpenter and imagine that you just had a discussion about how to make things out of wood. The evaluation of human character is a separate subject from all of the goals of the arts, trades, and sciences, except for politics. Millions of people regularly make the mistake of talking endlessly about the character of politicians while thinking they are talking about the topic of politics. Big mistake! In the absence of reasoning about issues directly, judgment about long-term consequences is impossible and therefore genuine conservative prudence is also impossible. It is the height of imprudence to abandon our obligation to engage in responsible, rational dialogue about the nation's important issues in exchange for petty partisan bickering that amounts to little more than a melodramatic episode of a soap opera filled with childish name calling. We need the independent voices of principled conservatives to insist on the priority of the exercise of principled conservative reasoning in public discourse. The exercise of reason is the only pathway to prudence. In the absence of reasoning guided by principles, there is no such thing as conservative reasoning or conservative prudence.

### **What are You Choosing to Conserve?**

The first four of Russell Kirk's principles revolve around one central principle. This principle articulates the basic functional identity of all conservatism. The functional identity of conservatism is that in order to be conservative, something must be conserved. This idea is simple and uncontroversial. In the absence of this idea, it is impossible to even imagine any form of conservatism. Is there no conserving at all? Then there is no conservatism at all. It is as plain as the noses on our faces. If you want to be a conservative, you must conserve something. Kirk defined the scope of possible conservation in terms of the enduring moral order of humanity, and the conventions, customs, and prescriptions that we inherit as the legacy of our civilization. Maintaining a living continuity with this scope of possible conservation is the essential labor of conservatism. This means that there is a necessary principle for all conservative action. The necessary principle is that all conservatives must choose what they desire to conserve. Living out this principle is the actual act of being conservative. The reason this principle of choosing is absolutely necessary for all conservatives is that there are zero conservatives who import the whole depth and breadth of their heritage into their daily living. It is impossible to do this. It is impossible to maintain continuity with the whole history of a civilization. This means that all conservatives, regardless of their particular background, must choose what customs, conventions, and historically vetted prescriptions they embrace in order to create and maintain a healthy conservative continuity with their past. All conservatives must actively interpret, with the knowledge of their own heritage, the enduring moral order of humanity in order to decide what moral truths ought to endure in their personal lives and in their society. A conservative who is not thoughtful about this selection process will fail to manifest the necessary depth of essential continuity with our heritage that is the life blood of all fully functioning conservatism.



What are you choosing to conserve? There exists a deadly combination of elements that is short-circuiting the selection process of millions of conservatives. Conservatism is dying in America, not because the "liberals" are "winning", or the "deep state" is subverting all that is good. Conservatism is dying because so many conservatives are paying no mind to the essential legacies of their country, religion, and civilization. A conservative's heritage should be informing a conservative's worldview. The fact is that the popular conservatism of today is commonly conducted in the absence of conservative principles. Unprincipled conservatism is less concerned with conserving the time immemorial heritage of our ancient civilization and more concerned with debate tactics and novel political strategies that take advantage in the present hour. The unprincipled conservatives of today tend to think that they must automatically give all their focus to the imprudent rush to "win" a debate or election. Unprincipled conservatives have exchanged a proper focus upon our civilization's enduring moral order, customs, and conventions, for the mindless cheerleading for any new thing that is convenient for the present hour. All conservatives must give serious thought to the question, "What are you choosing to conserve?". In the absence of principled, self-aware, conservative selectivity, the beauty and power of the conservative mind is severely diminished.

If we are not engaged in our own selection process of choosing what we shall conserve, which is the only viable pathway for all fully functioning conservatives, then the selecting is done for us. When the selecting is done for us, individual choice is eliminated and the necessity of reasoning is diminished. When the necessity of reasoning is diminished, we look more like passive farm animals who are being led by the nose, than like full human beings capable of participating in the republic as conservative citizens. Fully functioning, self-aware conservatism is a much more powerful good to individuals and the nation than the lazy, consumer sheep mindset of always allowing others to do all the choosing for us. The chaotic results of failing to give due diligence to the selection process of choosing what we shall conserve is that such conservatives often find themselves in the position of actively working to destroy the very things they might actually wish to conserve. Accepting any random thing their leaders say without any thoughtful comparison to the rich legacies of the moral truths, customs, conventions, and traditional sensibilities that are supposed to be informing the conservative mind is the plain fruit of this lack of self awareness. Much of the forgetful ignorance found in the unprincipled conservatives of today is due to the lack of diligence in paying detailed attention to our heritage in order to choose what should be conserved. This lack of attention forces the forgetful conservative to languish in relative disconnection from the traditions and moral truths that are the necessary foundation, the beating heart, and living soul of conservatism.

In the absence of conservative principles that keep us thoughtfully connected to our heritage, the unprincipled conservative will often function like passive cheerleaders repeating what they have heard repeated. Instead of behaving like they have conservative minds able to apply conservative reasoning to the issues of the nation, unprincipled conservatives recite with passion, the current marketing slogans of the hour. Unprincipled conservatives have traded in their responsibility to be fully functioning conservatives in exchange for embracing the more passive role of playing

the consumer sheep, the party parrot, or the Burkean cow. This betrayal of responsibility is the death of fully functioning conservatism. The over hyped paranoia among unprincipled conservatives regarding the loss of a political contest has overcome the just fear of losing touch with the foundations of knowledge and morality that make us conservative in the first place. This happened not because of some demonic, socialist plot from the left. This terrible loss is the result of the ordinary failings of conservative identified people, who forgot that in order to be conservative, something must be conserved. In order for something to be conserved, conservatives must choose what that shall be. In order to choose well what shall be conserved, the human capacity for reasoning must be engaged in way that embraces the richly detailed heritage of our civilization.

### **Attending to our Heritage in order to Choose**

In the absence of actively choosing the portion of our heritage we believe must be conserved, we allow the full beauty and power of the conservative mind to wither and die. In order to clarify the extraordinary power of choice in the conservative mind, we must consider the idea of what it means to choose well. Choosing well requires that we have bothered to exercise our capacity to reason about our choices. Choosing well in the conservatism context means we must be diligent and persistent at paying close attention to the historical legacies that are the only founding details of our conservatism. It is impossible to choose well if we do not pay attention to our heritage. It is impossible to choose wisely if we are not even aware of the need to choose. When choosing what to conserve, we are selecting the moral ideas, and the customs, conventions, and prescriptions from our own history of traditions, which we want to remain active in our individual living and in our society. This act of selection identifies and embraces valuable information from our past in order to make it take shape in our present.

This is a very different act of attentiveness than simply using information from the past to justify something new in the present. The most common form of consulting with our heritage among unprincipled conservatives is to attempt to prove that some new strategy or idea in the present can be supported by conservatives. This style of interpreting our heritage is the same style as some Christians use to read the bible, which is called proof texting. Instead of reading to learn from the Bible, these Christians already know what they want to believe and use the bible to find proof that justifies their belief. In order to choose well what we desire to conserve, there must be attentiveness to the question of choice that leads us to a genuine consideration of what our heritage has to teach us. It is an abuse of heritage to use it merely as a proof text to justify any new thing in the present. The conservative mind is ever the student, learning from its heritage. The conservative mind does not merely consult one TV talking head compared to another TV talking head. Principled conservatives must compare the speech acts of all TV talking heads, politicians, and fellow citizens, to our own knowledge of the enduring moral truths, customs, conventions, and prescriptions of our heritage in order to discern if another person's talk and ideas have merit or not. In the context of politics, choosing well is not about being a passive consumer who merely looks at the prepackaged menu of pre-defined options to make their overly limited choice. It is about

bringing knowledge to bear upon the issues. If conservatives have no knowledge of their own heritage as they consider the issues, then their conservatism has died.

Genuine conservative choice draws off much broader and richer sources of information than the self serving noise of TV talking heads and party leaders. That source is the rich heritage of an entire civilization, which the conservative is supposed to have some interest in conserving. Our adherence to what we have chosen to embrace in that heritage is what makes us conservative in the first place. It is a simple truth that all conservatives must choose what to conserve of our own heritage. Active conservative choice is the power of the conservative mind to bless the nation. Blind party loyalty is the repudiation of conservative choice. Blind acceptance of whatever random exposure to our heritage that has been handed to us as a matter of circumstantial luck is also a repudiation of the beauty and power of conservative choice. The conservative mind pays regular, thoughtful attention to its rich heritage. In that attentiveness to the legacies of our civilization, the conservative mind always compares the pronouncements of political parties to its own knowledge of its chosen traditions. The conservative mind never blindly supports any party, person, or policy in the absence of conservatively principled consideration. The beauty of the conservative mind is that its ability to choose well transforms the best of our past heritage into a living reality of today, which can survive into the future. Selecting what is best out of our heritage and figuring out how to make it live in the present is the primary duty of conservative reasoning. In the absence of conservative choice, the conservative principle is abandoned; and the conservative mind is destroyed. When the conservative mind is destroyed through a lack of thoughtful choice, the impotent remnant that is left is a mechanically repetitious, servile robot that regularly falls prey to the depraved influence of pseudo-conservative pretenders.

The conservative mind does not consult the past merely to make glib justifications of any new idea in the present. The conservative mind makes choices about how to interpret the world, live in the world, and structure our societies by ensuring there is a living continuity with the established traditions of our past. We consult with the enduring heritage of our civilization in order to bring forth prescriptive values that shape how we think and live today. The conservative mind does not embrace the new out of the blue and try to force the past to justify the convenience of its present desire. Doing right according to the dictates of the heritage we wish to conserve is more important to the conservative mind than winning a debate or an election. Doing right by the prescriptive implications of the heritage we wish to conserve is the actual sacred act of being conservative.

The unprincipled conservatives in the United States are seriously disconnected from the customs, conventions, and moral truths of their own traditions. Instead of willfully conserving the past, unprincipled conservatives often rush to the new in the lust to win. Any party pronouncement, no matter how absurd and contrary to common sense, is supported through the unprincipled lust to feel powerful. The irony of unprincipled conservatives feeling powerful by behaving like sheep, who are being led by the nose, is more than a little disturbing. In allowing themselves to be disconnected from their own

heritage, unprincipled conservatives have become vulnerable to any new or radical thing that captures their fancy or seduces their lust for power. Such disconnected behavior by unprincipled conservatives is wholly lost and fundamentally anti-conservative. This destructive anti-conservative phenomenon has grown to the point that leaders of political parties now ask their followers to deny their own common sense in favor of remaining blindly faithful. This is right out of the dystopian novel 1984:

"The party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command."

– George Orwell's novel 1984.

In 2019, Big Brother is everywhere. Big government and big business are watching you through your computers, phone, TV, and internet connected appliances. The individual acts that are done in order to quietly watch you, with your semi-conscious consent, number in the dozens to thousands per day (depending on your usage of the internet). In the context of this omnipresent surveillance, we are told by leaders to deny our own sense, to forsake our own capacity to reason in favor of blind party loyalty, and to replace responsible conservative thought with the blind chanting of simplistic marketing slogans. Conservative minds are not the minds of sheep. The conservative mind rejects all such Orwellian nonsense. It is the most essential conservative command to pay close and intelligent attention to the enduring moral truths, customs, conventions, and prescriptions of our rich heritage. To use the information provided from our own eyes and ears in order to actually think about the world in a conservative manner is the essential soul of the conservative mind. Conservatism is not about giving up our own responsibilities and asking someone else to always lead us and do our thinking for us. There is an American tradition of taking responsibility to think for ourselves, even if it means questioning authority.

"It is the first responsibility of every citizen to question authority."

- Benjamin Franklin

"Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience."

- George Washington

"The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions, that I wish it to be always kept alive."

- Thomas Jefferson

"To announce that there must be no criticism of the president, or that we are to stand by the president, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American people."

- Theodore Roosevelt

The conservative mind always holds itself accountable to questioning everything in relation to its own knowledge of its cherished heritage. The dictates of any leader must always be questioned in comparison to the dictates of our heritage's enduring moral

truths, customs, conventions, and prescriptions, which we have chosen to embrace. This assumes that we have actually paid enough attention to that heritage in order to make our own choices.

The conservative mind does not just blindly support the proclamations of a few leaders as if they somehow, magically, have the power to represent the totality of our heritage. We must actually step up as responsible conservatives and choose what we are going to conserve. Nothing is conserved that is not considered in the context of our choosing how to live. The conservative mind connects its present living with best of the heritage from its past. Deciding what is best in our heritage requires that we choose what to embrace in our heritage. The conservative mind does not embrace every new and novel innovation of ambitious pretenders just because they claim to speak for all of conservatism. The key to thriving well as a conservative is to pay close, personal attention to our own heritage, which helps us answer the essential conservative question, "What are You Choosing to Conserve?". The persistent attentiveness needed to answer this question is the workhorse of conservative worldviews. The labor of attending to this question is the heart and soul of the conservative mind. The failure to be selective about what to conserve means that many conservatives are simply repeating what they are hearing spoken in public, which is often the shallow distortions of a small group of special interests who are only interested in conserving their own power and money.

### **Can Conservatism Really be Defined by Principles?**

The first four principles in Kirks 1987 lecture relate to the essential essence of all conservatism. This essence is that in order to be conservative, something must be conserved. The rest of his principles are subject to a much greater range of interpretation with regard to their status as conservative principles. Virtually all conservatives agree with the first four principles. And all possible definitions of conservatism are at least partially covered by the essence of those four principles. All people who embrace the label of conservative must seek to conserve something. All self-identified conservatives, and this label covers a vast diversity of humanity, are looking to repeat something from the past. The rest of Kirk's principles may or may not be necessary to the idea of conservatism, even though all ten principles have had wide support from conservatives since before *The Conservative Mind* was written. Yet, it is possible, and probably necessary, to take the essential first four principles and connect them to different sets principles as part of the process of exploring conservatism.

So far in this essay, one could be forgiven for inferring that we thought that establishing the existence of necessary conservative principles was the complete and satisfying answer to defining conservatism. It is true that principles lend extraordinary defining substance to conservatism. It is also true that the complete absence of principles kills the possibility of any coherent "ism". However, asking if a particular set of principles or if principles in general can actually define conservatism in a complete manner is a separate question with less than clear answers.

Conservatism is not a simple object with the same razor sharp and crystal clear definability that we have with the task of defining a water molecule or a hammer. The most basic assumption about defining conservatism is that it will make it possible to distinguish the conservative from the non-conservative. This is not as straightforward as one might think. Kirk insisted that there is no iron clad list of principles to absolutely define conservatism, but his first four principles are as close as it gets to being just that. However, I found that Kirk's first four principles cannot define conservatism in a way that reliably distinguishes the conservative from the non-conservative. Ironically, this failure exists precisely to the extent that the principles are either true or useful.

To illustrate the difficulty in defining conservatism, consider the nature of the first four principles, which have something to say about all conservatism. The four principles are reducible to one defining essence, which is that in order to be conservative, something must be conserved. This is as clear and simple as it gets with regard to illustrating a defining essence of conservatism. Kirk's four principles are all about choosing what parts of our past we want to bring to life in the present and the future. The idea that conservatives ought to respect the enduring moral order, customs, conventions, and prescriptions of our heritage both in our living and in our philosophy of governance is not the slightest bit controversial among virtually all conservatives. However, there are two things that inhibit this defining essence from helping us to identify conservatives from non-conservatives.

First, implementing Kirk's first four principles of conservatism means that conservatives must, by the very nature of what is required to follow the four principles, sometimes do the opposite. There is not one conservative on the planet who imports the whole of our civilization's heritage of morals, customs, conventions and prescriptions. This is literally physically impossible. Therefore, all conservatives must be very selective. In the act of choosing what portions of our heritage we wish to embrace, we also act to reject a portion of our heritage. Therefore, all conservatives sometimes must reject various interpretations or aspects of the enduring moral order, and reject many customs, conventions, and prescriptions that are part of our whole history of heritage in order to be faithful to the conservative principle. In order to choose some things to be conserved; other things must be left behind.

Second, there is significant truth in the conservative principle. This means that it is true for all and not just true for conservatives. There is not a single so called liberal on the planet who absolutely rejects every trace of our civilization's heritage and decides to do everything new. This is also impossible. All liberals conserve something sometimes. All conservatives sometimes do the opposite of the conservative principle and all so called non-conservatives sometimes obey the conservative principle because the principle in plain truth is not a principle for "conservatives". The conservative principle is a human principle that has benefit for all humanity not just for people who claim the label "conservative". To the extent that conservative principles are either true or useful, they are true or useful for all and are therefore cannot define conservatism in a way that reinforces group identity in the manner that is popular in U.S. politics. All human beings

conserve something from the past. All human beings let some portion of our heritage die.

If even the first four of Kirk's principles are limited in their capacity to define conservatism in terms of identity, we must realize an important truth. The truth is that any other conservative principle not reducible to the essence of conserving is less able to define conservatism in terms of group identity than Kirk's first four principles. Kirk claimed that conservatism is neither a religion nor a dogma. He said that conservatism is a body of opinion, while leaving it open as to exactly what that body of opinion must be. There must be diversity in conservative thought and principles because that is part of the enduring nature of humanity, which is the foundation of the enduring moral order. Whatever definability conservatism has, it will not be expressed in terms of a comprehensive list of principles that all conservatives must obey all the time. This is impossible. There are no principles that can reliably distinguish the conservative from the non-conservative in terms of group identity. Only the essential conservative principle (actually conserving our heritage) defines conservatism for all humanity, which breaks down the group exclusive defining habits that are popular in U.S. politics. All humans have both inclinations to conserve the past and to innovate a new present.

The inability to create an absolute list of principles all conservatives must obey, Kirk's relegation of conservative ideas to the realm of opinion, the fact of extraordinary diversity in genuine conservative thought and choice, and the universality of the essential conservative principle, all illustrate that any principled definition of conservatism is going to be limited. Kirk's understanding of conservatism allowed for considerable diversity of thought, but the marketing interests of today's unprincipled conservatism always wants artificial conformity at all cost. Much of the passion to precisely define conservatism today exists to only serve the consolidation of the power of special interests. But the defining power of the conservative mind is its capacity to actually conserve a heritage. This defining conserving act of individual conservative minds exists in accord with a diversity of genuine conservative thought and choice that serves the wellbeing of the nation.

### **Can Conservatism be Defined in Terms of Claims about Knowledge?**

In contemporary U.S. political talk, questions about the validity of knowledge permeate almost everything. The whole of American political discourse in the U.S. is continuously spiraling around questions about who has the needed knowledge to solve problems, who has just another useless opinion, and how can we tell difference. Does conservatism have a unique take on these questions that enables us to use it in defining the difference between conservatives and non-conservatives? An example of a unique claim about knowledge that correlates with identity is found in Christianity. There is a claim in Christianity that all Christians have access to reliable knowledge through the special revelation of God. The claim that Christians have reliable knowledge gained through special revelation is often contrasted with their claims about the unreliable opinions of non-Christians, who are separated from God. This unique Christian claim

about trustworthy knowledge could be used in attempts to create a definition of Christianity that distinguish all Christians, who have access to trustworthy knowledge from God, from all non-Christians, who have no such access. Whether or not any such attempts at defining Christianity are satisfying is a separate question. The question here is, "Is there anything like this for conservatism?". As we seek an answer to this question, we cannot just import claims about knowledge from any particular aspect of the heritage that any particular conservative may look up to. For example, the possible defining uniqueness of Christianity's claims about knowledge may help define the Christian conservative, but it does not define the non-Christian conservative. Is there anything about conservatism's relationship to knowledge that helps us define conservatism itself and thereby define all conservatives?

Conservatism as a self-aware perspective was born partly in relation to a specific criticism of knowledge. Edmund Burke, who is considered to be the father of Anglo-American conservatism, gave us the first historically notable glimpse of this conservative criticism in his response to the French revolution. It is possible to frame some of Burke's response to the French revolution in terms of issues about human knowledge. The traditional conservative criticism of the knowledge of "liberals" and "radicals", which is often linked back to Burke, consists of the conservative insistence that social and political problems cannot be solved through the application of isolated theoretical reasoning applied through abstract principles. Theoretical reasoning is seen as a problem when it is done in isolation from a serious consideration of the history of human experience. When theoretical reasoning about social and political changes is isolated from any consideration of the relevant historical heritage of the context in question, traditional conservatism considers such reasoning to be highly likely to produce defective knowledge. The ideas and abstract reasoning of one armchair philosopher about changing a whole society, whether it is formulated over the weekend, a period of years, or even a lifetime are less trusted by conservatives than the wisdom that comes from the whole history of an ancient civilization's historical vetting of knowledge and its formation of sociopolitical structures.

It may seem strange to some to try to define conservatism in terms of a claim to superior knowledge and reasoning when its foundation seems much more sentimental. Kirk wrote during his discussion of Burke in *The Conservative Mind*, "The individual is foolish, but the species is wise; prejudices and prescriptions and presumptions are the instruments which the wisdom of the species employs to safeguard man against his own passions and appetites."<sup>9</sup> The desire to let our heritage have a say in the present may be nothing more than a sentimental bias. Our attachment for the embrace of ancient prescriptions may be a matter of pious reverence. The presumptions we employ to interpret the world may have simply been handed down to us as an inheritance of heritage toward which we possess a deeply felt trust. Sentimental, reverent trust is not considered by philosophers to be sufficient for the vetting of knowledge. But the bindings of sentiment, reverence, and trust open the conservative mind to the tremendous value of the knowledge and wisdom generated by a vast history of human thriving. Such bindings connect us to the historical vetting of knowledge and institutions that we inherit with the development of a whole civilization. Such bindings are the



essential heart of conservative perspective. The power to connect to a heritage, which we find in our personal attachments are not the end goal of conservatism, but merely the beginning. These sentimental attachments are an invitation to continue on a journey with a powerful friend to help us on the way. To form a friendship with our heritage as we work to interpret life is the founding alliance of conservatism. Our sentiments, reverence and trust are not, in point of fact, rational. But they are the conservative foundation for binding ourselves to a capacity for increasing the quality of our reasoning about the values and goals of life. To open our minds to learn from our own history can be an act of the highest rational value and is a benefit to all humanity.

There are two things that make the traditional conservative criticism of theoretical reasoning on social and political change a candidate for use in defining conservatism. First, this criticism of theoretical knowledge is a very common epistemological element in the history of traditional conservative thought and therefore stands some chance of covering a wide diversity of conservatives. Second, it is related to the essential defining act of conserving in a very basic way because it is an epistemological argument that justifies conservatives' attachment to the legacies of their heritage. Yet, there are also two things that limit this traditional conservative criticism of "liberal knowledge" from being useful for distinguishing the conservative from the non-conservative in a defining manner.

First, unlike the unique Christian claims about the knowledge verifying power of God, which definitively draws a difference between Christian and non-Christian, the conservative take on improving our reasoning about social and political issues is a matter of common human perspective. There are no serious philosophical arguments, which state that theoretical reasoning alone is sufficient for building a civilization. It is a matter of common human sense to understand the basic need to consider the history of human experience as we solve problems. Second, traditional conservatism does not reject theoretical reasoning categorically nor insists that theoretical reasoning be completely excluded from our attempts to think about social and political change. For all human beings, conservative and non-conservative alike, the observation of human experience and our ability to reason theoretically are joined together in the functioning of our minds.

This means that the claims about knowledge that come out of traditional conservatism are not able to provide us with a defining ability to reliably distinguish between conservatives and non-conservatives. Some non-conservatives seriously consider the preservation of the legacies of our civilization as they abstractly reason about social and political change. In moments of such behavior, the so called liberals can wholly or partially express the conservative principle. Some conservatives are comfortable engaging in theoretical reasoning as the leading edge of their engagement of social and political issues, even though they do not let go of their commitment to conserve the knowledge, principles, and institutions of their inherited legacy. In their theoretical comforts the so called conservative brings forth a so called liberal flavor of reasoning. The real defining resolve to our question here is one of individual expression. Each conservative is responsible to express their own opinions with regard to choosing what

should be conserved from a beloved heritage. Each conservative is responsible to embrace some set of methods for conserving. Every individual is capable of a unique expression of the conservative act. As such, the essential conservative principle, which is that to be conservative one must conserve something, only applies at the individual level. Conservatism is not an absolute, unchangeable list of agreements on what to conserve and how to do it. Conservatism is the individual standing up and acting to make such conservation real. Conservatism is our individual attachment to and execution of the conservative act. The individual feels a connection to a heritage, chooses what in that heritage must be conserved, and acts to conserve. This individuality of expressing the conservative principle allows for extraordinary diversity. Any answers to the question of conservative distinction that is based on the uniqueness of every individual's expression will not be useful for defining people in terms of the political group category "conservative" as is popularly done in the United States.

### **A Defining Problem within Conservatism**

The functioning essence of conservatism is the act of conserving. Why should we conserve the past? The conservative claim about knowledge is, literally, the only justification of the existence of traditional conservatism. Nobody argues that we should conserve the past because it brings us incorrect knowledge or because making our heritage live in the present will destroy the society in which we live. All arguments that we should conserve some aspect of our inheritance from the past are grounded in an understanding that our heritage communicates useful knowledge or an understanding of how to live that is life affirming in some way. The knowledge of what it means to live well has been in development for millennia and the conservative mind wants to access to that valuable history in the present. This brings into focus, a defining problem within conservatism in the United States.

If the only justification for the existence of conservatism is related to its claims about knowledge, and these claims about knowledge demand that we pay rigorous attention to the details and history of our own heritage, then our only possibility for being conservatives is to participate in what turns out to be the defining conservative act. That act is to pay high quality attention to learning of our heritage, which involves interpreting our heritage, heeding the enduring moral truths, allowing ancient principles and well established traditions to have a say in the present, and using what we learn of our inheritance to assess the present. The closure of the defining act is to make a choice about what should be conserved and then to act to conserve it. The failure of many conservatives to even be self-aware of the necessity to make conservative choices in light of the knowledge of our heritage is a defining failure of conservatism in the United States. The less we pay attention to our heritage and the less we choose what is valuable from our own heritage and act to conserve it, then the less conservatism will be realistically defined in terms of being a living reality in the United States. This defining failure has resulted in the extraordinary disconnection of modern conservative political thought from our own heritage and the loss of power to conserve anything. If we do not understand our own heritage, we cannot use it to assess the present. If our heritage plays no role in assessing our nation's issues and evaluating the pronouncements of our

leaders then we have no genuine conservative stand at all. If we have no real conservative stand at all, then we fall prey to every fake conservative pretender. The failure of many conservatives to bring forth the defining essence of conservatism in their thinking, choosing, and living has resulted in the severe distortion that is popular unprincipled conservatism.

An irony of conservatism in the U.S. today is that unprincipled conservatives now employ what a traditional conservative perspective could describe as a liberal epistemology in their assessments of political and social issues. The knowledge of traditional moral understandings and time tested conventions and practices have lost relevance as unprincipled conservatives support every novel idea and theoretical strategy of their leaders because they are functioning as passive consumers, who know only the desire to win in the present moment. Our heritage is never consulted in a conservatively principled manner when the concocted theoretical abstractions of how to win an election are the only focus of unprincipled, marketing obsessed, conservatives. To simply act as a consumer, choosing from the political menu that has been prepared for us, purchasing our choice with a vote then proceeding to blindly support that purchase no matter what, calls for the rejection of reasoning about our own heritage. The conservative mind is not the mind of the consumer sheep or the party parrot. The valuable moral principles, knowledge, and traditions of the past are being drowned in a flag colored bathtub filled with irrelevant marketing hype. Winning, as an end in itself, has become more important than truth. It has even been implied by some self-proclaimed representatives of conservatism that truth does not exist and can be replaced by "alternative facts" at the whim of the party. The rejection of the concept of truth is as anti-conservative as it gets. Who needs the time tested traditions of our heritage? We have an alternative tradition and heritage that we just made up! Conservative pretenders inhabit a lot of the political landscape in the United States. These pretenders believe they can just spit any foolish and immoral thing into the face of the U.S. public without any reverence at all for the moral truths, customs, conventions, and prescriptions that are the legacy of our esteemed heritage. That they are getting away with this bald defacing of conservative thought is a warning signal to us that traditional conservatism is dying in the United States.

Fitting right in with William F. Buckley's criticism of the liberal "social engineers", conservative leaders determine what is true and false at the voting booth because winning matters more than our heritage. In an apparent wish to outdo the "liberals", we see conservative leaders rushing to spend big. Many conservative leaders want to spend big money in the context of big government. Living up to a traditional conservative criticism of liberals, modern conservative leaders act as if they despise local governance and the voluntary community of local citizens, which has been a time tested ideal of traditional conservatism (see Kirk's 8th principle). National conservative leaders carelessly toss the traditional conservative principle of favoring local governance and the voluntary role of individual citizens in their community into the trash as they engage a mad rush to put as much power as possible into the hands of as few people as possible (also departing from Kirk's 9th principle). The pseudo-conservative leaders of today have replaced the need for conservative principles and for conservative

minds capable of taking heritage seriously with the need for dog whistles and pavlovian slobbering.

The conservative mind has no loyalty to pretenders just because they use the word "conservative" or any other favored terminology. The conservative mind, precisely to the extent that it is a conservative mind, only has loyalty to the ideal of working to make sure the legacies of our heritage have a real say in the present. The only way to engage such work is to be knowledgeable about our heritage enough to choose that which we believe should be conserved. Then we must allow our knowledge and our choices to shape how we assess the personal, social and political issues of our time. When we forsake our own knowledge of our own heritage in exchange for any new thing that serves an intemperate lust to win by any means, conservatism dies in forgetful ignorance. Unprincipled conservatives, who are this severely disconnected from a detailed, life affirming knowledge of their own heritage are unable to function fully as a conservative. The extraordinarily rich heritage of our civilization has much of value to say about how to live well and how to govern. Unfortunately, the cartoonish memes of the present hour have become a replacement for the thousands of years of human experience that make up our heritage, inform our religious and philosophical understandings, and have created the principled structure of our country. We have traded in a vast heritage for cartoon memes and junk talk. If we learn to think like a cartoon, we will die like a cartoon. The death of conservatism in the United States is not being boldly announced with the trumpets of angels. Conservatism is slowly dying to the sound of a sitcom laugh track as conservative identified people pay more attention to the irrelevant distractions of the present than they give to the enduring moral truths of the heritage they claim to want to conserve. It is time for all conservatives to seriously think about the question, "What do you want to conserve?"

### **When the Conservative Mind is Most Beautiful**

With just an inkling of sentiment, a trace of reverence, a touch of deeply held trust in that which has enduring value, a human being can guide the rest of a life in the light of the values, ideas, and knowledge so esteemed. Even when we are profoundly ignorant, the slightest guidance on how to approach life can be used during the whole of a life to persistently seek the good in life. Every human being is born with an animal instinct for what is fair and good, [even monkeys are born with that](#), but we are born with precious little real knowledge of what is just, what is good, what is of virtue in living, and what is worthy of our attention. In life, we must learn these things. The conservative mind has a faith in the idea that the past has something of value to teach us and that we do well to learn at the feet of our own heritage. There is nothing in the history of conservatism that proclaims to us that this learning happens by magic. The conservative mind is conservative only by virtue of its engagement in conserving actions, which result from making informed choices about our heritage. Genuine conservative actions that are the result of informed conservative choices are the defining movements of the conservative mind. Therefore, to the extent that it is genuinely conservative, the conservative mind is vigorous and persistent in asking questions of the past, because every act of conserving our heritage is an act of asking the past how to live in the present. The conservative

mind deploys questions in its examination of life in order to make conservation possible. In the complete absence of questioning our heritage, the ability to conserve it is destroyed.

What should be conserved and what should be left to die? How shall we conserve it faithfully? What principles shall we live by and what does it mean to interpret those principles? What knowledge is relevant to a life well lived? What is justice? What is good? What is virtuous and excellent in regard to human character? Even if we have memorized what our chosen portion of heritage has taught on such questions, we still must ask what it means to live it out. Consider, for example, the teaching of Jesus that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. To say that there is a broad consensus among Christians that this teaching has substance and value for daily life is an understatement. Yet, how exactly do I love this particular neighbor on this particular day? What does it really mean to love myself? Even when the teachings of our heritage are all the truth we need for a particular issue, we still must ask important questions. We must develop a rigorous habit of asking questions in our examination of life especially if there is truth in the heritage we desire to conserve.

The conservative mind does not assume the completeness of its own knowledge. This is because such a haughty presumption of knowledge is a hindrance to our desire and ability to consult with our heritage in our daily life. Who needs to continue to study a scripture, or the founding documents of a nation, or our civilization's history of thought, if they already think they know it all? Who needs to ask of their heritage about the priorities of their living if they think their understanding is already perfect? Who needs a heritage at all if they believe they are self-sufficient? The imperfectability of humanity is Kirk's 6th principle. What Kirk applied in reference to the structuring of social order is also relevant to the individual. The conservative mind does not assume the perfection of its own understanding. The habit of unprincipled conservatives insisting they are always right in everything they advocate, merely to score political points, is a complete defilement of Kirk's sixth principle.

The arrogance of playing the "I am always right" game defiles the essence of conservatism to the extent that this shallow insistence on our own perfection tends to stop us from giving real thought to our own heritage. People who force themselves to think that they are always right do not need the continuing help of their heritage to make choices. The conservative mind has an abiding faith that its heritage is a powerful daily ally in its continuing quest for wisdom and expresses a commitment to conversing both with that heritage and with one another about that heritage. The results of our own efforts to conserve will often only be fully known in light of long term consequences. Therefore, the conservative mind gives due diligence to expressing our capacity to question and reason in order to excel at bringing the best of the past into the present. Examining our heritage with a view to make it live in the present is literally how a conservative must work in order to conserve. The instant conservatives stop consulting with their heritage, conservatism begins to die. The conservative mind is most beautiful when it is most conserving. The process of conserving a heritage is impossible without

the knowledge of that heritage, which empowers the conservative mind to ask the important questions about how to live well.

### **The Conservative Mind and The Examined Life**

The call of conservatism invites us to examine life in the light of the principles, ideas, traditional practices, ethical considerations, and wisdom generated by an ancient civilization. We have inherited a vast legacy from a heritage that spans a significant portion of the recorded history of humanity. The call of conservatism is an invitation to not forget that heritage. It is a call to be vigilant about learning from the finest teachers, leaders, cultural and political practices, thinkers and spiritual guides that the entire history humanity has produced. There is an important saying in the dialogues of Plato, which directs our attention to the necessity of being mentally alive and questioning. It is a saying that resonates deeply with the sacred call of conservatism. Plato's saying is, "The unexamined life is not worth living". To live the examined life is to be vigilant every day in our quest for knowledge and the virtue of human character. The examined life regularly asks questions about our understanding of what it means to live well and to be well. The call to conservatism is not an invitation to rest complacently in the false idea that we are somehow perfect, have "arrived", or must somehow always have the correct answer in a political debate. The conservative mind does not embrace the arrogant attitude that it has no need to learn useful things from valuable resources about life's most important issues. The examined life of the conservative mind assumes the imperfection of its own knowledge and seeks to strengthen its understanding of justice and virtue, of individual and social responsibility, of the nature of the public and national good, of our ethical obligations, and of what is good in life, while faithfully embracing our heritage as a valuable ally in this task.

Those, who live an examined life, question the knowledge, ideas, character, and behavior, of themselves and their society in order to improve their understanding and increase their capacity for good. The conservative mind is eager to learn of its own heritage as it gives careful examination to the task of living well. The conservative mind allows the heritage it wants to conserve to teach, challenge, and lead it into the future. The call of conservatism is a call to live an examined life as we thoughtfully embrace our heritage to help us see clearly. Examining life together in the light of our own heritage is the hearth and home of conservatism. The only way to fully live out Kirk's vision of the conservative as being a person of the future rooted in the past is for us to be diligently attentive to examining life in the present. The great beauty of the conservative mind is that its thoughtful examination of life through the lens of its heritage makes possible the existence of genuinely conservative choices, which help to preserve the best of our past so that the people of today can have a better tomorrow.

## **A Call to Conservative Action!**

In the absence of fully functioning conservatism in the United States, the republic we have known and loved will not be conserved and shall pass away. The time for genuine conservative choice is now!

What are you choosing to conserve???

### **Footnotes:**

1. Buckley, William F., from the cover of the 7th edition of *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, Washington D.C., Gateway Editions; 7th Revised edition, 2001.
2. Kirk, Russell, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, Washington D.C., Gateway Editions; 7th Revised edition, 2001.
3. Feulner, Edwin, (accessed 10-23-2019), <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/the-roots-modern-conservative-thought-burke-kirk>, 2008.
4. Kirk, Russell, *First Principles Series: Ten Conservative Principles*, The Heritage Foundation, 1986.
5. Lincoln, Abraham, Cooper Union Address, 1860.
6. Buckley, William F., *Our Mission Statement*, *The National Review*, 1955.
7. Adams, John, letter to Mercy Warren, April 16, 1776.
8. Kirk, *First Principles*, p. 5.
9. Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, p. 34.